

ARTHUR HENRY

Conn. ✓

An Island
Cabin



THE HOUSE IN THE WOODS

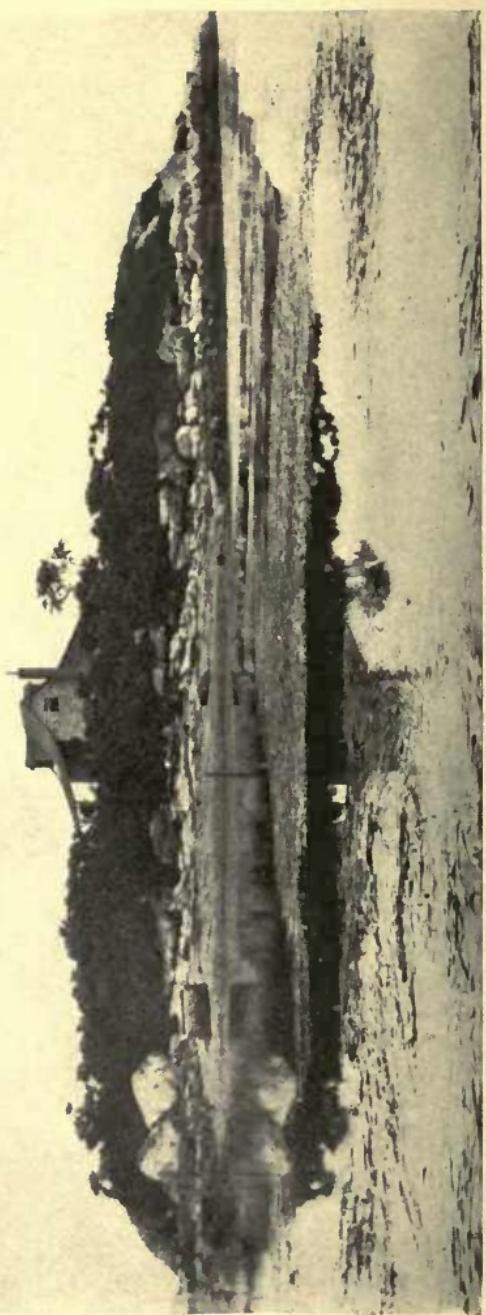
By Arthur Henry

Author of "An Island Cabin"

This is the story of a return to nature; the building of a mountain home, and the conquest of the soil. It is a nature book with human interest, and in addition to the freshness and charm of the country life and the wood lore pictures in these pages, the story thrills with the humanity which the author has found and depicted with the originality and freshness characteristic of true insight. He tells how the forest was cleared and a house was reared; how a home was made, and the wild things of the mountains yielded place to their domesticated brethren. He pictures the prowess of the mountainers, the deeds of the woodsmen, and the influences which made themselves felt in a brighter life for the people of the woods. The beauty of nature in the mountains, the joy of existing out of doors, and the success, not of mere country living, but also of country fellowship, are brilliantly pictured in this delightful story of a new life in a Catskill Mountain home.

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AN ISLAND CABIN

BY

ARTHUR HENRY

AUTHOR OF "THE HOUSE IN THE WOODS"

ILLUSTRATED



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To Maude

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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Chapter I



WHILE the world on shore is gasping in the heat I am sitting on the porch of my island cabin, the sound of the incoming tide in my ears, the cool salt air sweeping about me.

There are those so poor that they must walk through the blazing streets to their work in stores and factories. There are those rich enough to idle the summer in mountain and water-side resorts. I belong to neither of these classes, nor to any of the grades between. I am so poor in pocket that, were I in the city, I should often walk to save my nickel, and yet my days are filled with such comfort and delight as only the possessor of millions is supposed to enjoy.

I am lord of an Isle. The nearest mainland is a mile away. I have not seen a policeman nor disagreed with my neighbor for a month. There are days together when the wide stretch of water between me and all laws and customs is rough enough to swamp a boat. Every stone and inch of earth, the great rocks and smooth white beach of my little kingdom are mine to do with as I will. The wind and water bring food and fuel to my borders, requiring of me only the effort of taking it.

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For years I had heard of little islands along the coast from Connecticut to Maine that were owned by no one and could be had for the claiming. I had heard of them vaguely. They took form in my fancy, dotting a fanciful sea, green-hooded isles with a wall of rocks and a sandy beach. They were my possessions in Spain. Some time, when I became rich, I would select my own and settle there, with my income and my books, in peace. It is a question if one's dreams can be bought with a surplus. I got mine for three hundred dollars, and I believe that I enjoy their possession because I had no more.

For years I had heard of them and longed for one of my own and done nothing, held, like most of those I know, grinding at the mill, by a fancied necessity. And so it might have been forever had not a vagrant impulse intervened.

It was a raw Sunday in December. I had spent the day with my friends, Nancy and Elizabeth. A friend of Nancy's had told her of a number of unclaimed islands off the Connecticut coast. "He says, if you want an island, go up to Noank and see Captain Green, an old sailor, who knows those waters."

We got time-tables and maps and found Noank to lie half-way between New London and Stonington, just where Fisher's Island Sound joins the sea.

"Some day," I said, "we'll get us an

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island, you, Elizabeth and I, or, if Mother Grundy objects, we'll get two of them close together."

"Some day is a long time off," said Nancy. "I wish we had one now."

On my way home in the afternoon, I found myself near the slip of the Stonington boat. I had seven dollars in my pocket. The fare to Noank and return would be six dollars. I had passed this way often in the heat of the summer, looked at the boat, dreamed my dream and turned away. Now, when the icy wind stung my face, I went aboard and bought my ticket. To be sure, I had never known before just where to go, but I have often wondered at my proceeding.

At sunrise, I left the train at Noank and walked along a winding, narrow street, over a hill, through the town. Lights were still shining in kitchen windows, for the day had not yet penetrated the houses, and the village, accustomed to rising at four o'clock during the fishing season, was astir early even on this winter morning when it might have slept. Snow lay upon trees and bushes, covered the stone walls and picket fences that bordered the streets, and hid the fields, rising over the hills to the west. The east half of the town is a sharp slope to the water-side, and I could look down every side street across Fisher's Island Sound and out to sea. Descending a hill at the southeastern end, I passed through the

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shipyard, and came out upon a point of land where stands the Noank lighthouse, and, just this side of it, the home of Captain Green. On one side of the road was his house; on the other, his workshop, resting partly on land and partly on piles over the water. He was once a Norse sailor—a captain in the merchant marine. He is now a rigger of boats. I found him at this early hour opening a coil of rope in his shop. He had just extinguished his lamp, for the light of sunrise, glancing across the sea and Sound, fell upon his work through the eastern windows. A fire was roaring in the stove. The wind and water were noisy at the door.

"Good morning, Captain," said I.

He lifted his grizzled head into the red light falling through the window back of him, and peered at me for a moment, silent.

"Come closer," he said, "so's I can see who ye be."

"You never saw me before," said I, "but I have come up from New York to see you."

I was close to him now, and saw that his eyes were of a clear blue, keen, shrewd and questioning. His face was red and rugged, a strong, well-preserved Norse face, seasoned by a life of sunlight, rain and salt air.

I told him my errand and asked him if he could help me.

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"There's islands off here, true enough—little hummocks and reefs—but I don't know as there's any fit to live on."

"Where are they, Captain? Can you see them from here?"

He threw the door open and a strong, cold wind swept in. A handful of spray came over the door-sill. Far to our right lay the long, low ridge of Fisher's Island, its eastern point reaching into the ocean. To the left of us ran the Connecticut coast, coming to a point about seven miles away at Watch Hill. Looking straight before us, between the nose of Fisher's Island and Watch Hill, we could see the ocean. In this direction, a mile away, were four islands, one of about five acres, the others just rocky hummocks, rising from the water and capped with soil.

"The large one is Mystic Island," said the Captain. "It belongs to a Norwich man. The three dumplings are no one's, so far as I know."

I looked at the distant islands in the tossing water with a growing wonder and excitement. Could it be that I was soon to possess one?

"If I build a house on one of those," I asked, "will it be mine?"

"You can rig her up and claim her and she's yours."

"I wish I could get out there now and select one. Can you take me?"

He looked at me quizzically.

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"If the *Eric Lief* was afloat we could sail out easy."

He glanced at his sloop hauled high on shore for the winter and I followed his glance wistfully.

"It's a trim boat," I said.

"Aye, it is. I made her myself—every bit of her."

"I could tell that by her staunch look. She favors you. I wish she were afloat."

"You want to get out there bad, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I'll row you. We can make it, I guess."

He took a pair of oars from their pegs, gave me a rubber coat and hat, clothed himself in a suit of tarpaulin, and climbed down the wet steps outside to a slippery landing, where a small boat was lying. He pushed it off into the water and held it away from the boards.

"Get in there quick," he commanded.

I jumped into the tossing boat, and he followed, pushing vigorously with an oar. A moment's wrestle with the waves, and we were safely off, wet from head to foot, and with a good cargo of water.

"Bail her out," he said, kicking a pail toward me. He was pulling steadily. The boat was tossing and lunging and the spray was falling over us. I did not know then the task he had undertaken. I have since tried this voyage against wind and tide, and

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failed. The Captain was steadily gaining way, and he was seventy years old.

"They are strong enemies," I said, "the wind and the tide."

Fully five minutes later he murmured, as if to himself:

"Not enemies, no, they are old friends of mine."

An hour's pull brought us to the nearest of the islands. We landed on a sandy beach in the lee. The wind did not reach us here. It was calm and warm in the sunshine. Clambering up the rocks, we found a quarter of an acre of smooth, rich earth, covered with a thick brush. The windward shore was solid rock, with wide, smooth ledges, precipitous walls, and huge boulders. Here the wind blew a gale, and the surf beat furiously. It was bitter cold, and the scene across the white-caps to the ocean was wild and desolate. But the sounds around me, the cold, the endless stretch of water, filled me with delight, and I fixed upon this island as my abode. I christened it "The Isle o' Quirk."

Back in the Captain's shop, I drew a plan for a cabin, and that afternoon secured a carpenter to build it before spring for two hundred and seventy-five dollars.

The last week in May the cabin was completed. Early Saturday morning we were in Noank—Elizabeth, Nancy and I. The day before we had spent two hours shopping. It cost us thirty dollars to buy what

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we needed—a kitchen-table, a hammock, water pails, two rustic settees, two camp chairs, agate-ware plates, coffee cups, kettles, and frying pans, steel knives, aluminum spoons and forks, a hatchet, a coil of rope, the ticking for four narrow beds, and the bedding. The department store in New York shipped these goods without charge, and we found them waiting for us at the depot. We opened our trunk on the platform, and got out the ticks.

"Where can I get these filled?" I asked of the station master, who stood watching us with a friendly interest.

"You're the Isle o' Quirk people, ain't you?" he asked.

"Yes. Where can I get some straw?"

"There's a farmer just down the road there, second house from the corner—he fills ticks."

We found him at his breakfast and called him to the kitchen door.

"Can I get these ticks filled?"

He looked at us in silence until I repeated my question. Then he said slowly, as if there was some almost insurmountable obstacle in the way:

"Yes, I guess you can."

"How much?"

He thought a long time over this, looked at his wife, at the ticks, at the barn, and then at us.

"Well, I guess about a dollar and a quarter for the four of them."

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"When can I get them? I want them delivered to Ashbey's dock. He will take us to the island."

"I kinder thought you was the Quirk Island folks," he said, with an expression of relieved curiosity.

"How soon can you have them there?"

"Well, some time to-day or to-morrow, if it don't rain."

"Oh, come. We must have them over this morning. Come out to the barn and fill them now. We'll help you."

"Well, mebbe I can," he said, slowly.

We got him to the barn, threw down the straw, and saw the ticks filled and put on his wagon and his ox team yoked.

At the station, we found our boxes loaded on a one-horse wagon. Perched on the seat was a sturdy, bustling little Irishman, with a broad, contorted mouth and a shrewd eye.

"Where to?" he asked, picking up the reins. He scarcely waited for me to say Ashbey's dock before he was off.

"That's Bill," said the station master.

"He seems a brisk fellow."

"Yes, Bill's wide-awake. There's another fellow gone to expressing here now —got a new wagon and a faster horse. Bill was afraid you'd hire him, so he loaded up and was ready."

We followed our things along the winding street, through the town. It was a gray, windy day, but never have I met a finer

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sharpie with its load, and put back to Noank.

Nancy and Elizabeth were in the cabin, and I heard the sounds of clearing and cleaning. I knocked the boxes open with a stone, and carried in the things. Before this was done the rain had begun. I gathered a great pile of drift wood and stored it on the porch. Suddenly the storm broke. The rain fell in torrents and the wind rose to a tempest. As we closed the doors and windows of the cabin, and stood looking at each other and listening to the tumult of sounds outside, our eyes lit with delight. This was a grand welcome from the elements we had come to dwell among. The storm could not frighten us, for we loved it and heard no malice in its voice.

In a few moments, we were at work again. We built a roaring fire in the fireplace, hung the hammock across the room, put a gay-colored blanket over the table for a spread, drove nails for the kettles, built racks for the dishes, and made the whole place as bright and cozy as a ship's cabin.

For three days and nights the storm raged, and we did not weary of it. I have never had enough of a storm. The wind has always hailed me with a wild halloo and fled before I could find my wings to join it. The rain has beat upon the street I followed, or fallen with a multitude of sounds through the trees over me, or lured me to the loft where I might sit dry and hear its

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serenade, but it has always ceased before its song was finished, and left me dangling at the broken ends of its melody. On this island, I may get my fill of weather. Storms on land are strolling minstrels, or, at best, but little more than street bands, and on the open sea, they are not much better, for there, though the wind may wipe out cities and dismantle ships, it plays too much alone. Here in this harbor of the Sound, opening upon the ocean, in the midst of islands, exposed reefs and hidden rocks, where the tide races through the channel and human effort comes in contact with the elements on every hand, a storm is a full orchestra, with a great chorus of man's devising.

From the northeast, if it keeps its wind, it may come from Europe without obstruction. On the southwest, there is nothing but the bridges of the East River to check its course up the Sound from New York to me. On the south, I am sheltered by Fisher's Island; on the north, by Connecticut, but as one of these wind-breaks is three miles and the other a mile away, they do not smother me. I am set in the midst of a watery highway. Three hundred feet west is a bush buoy, marking the edge of my shoal. On a line with this, a little to the north, is a pole buoy, that swings with the tide. Just outside of these is the channel between Noank and Stonington. A mile and a half to the south is the main channel

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of the Sound, running between New York, New Haven, New Bedford, New London, Stonington, Watch Hill and the ocean. I can see eight of the lighthouses marking this way. Four of them form a straight line southwest. They are the Noank, North Dumpling, Race Rock and Gull Island lights. Just abreast of me, in the centre of the channel, a light-ship rides at anchor. Three miles further east rises the rock and round tower of Latimer's Reef, standing boldly against an horizon of air and water. Northeast of this, forming the other two points of a triangle, are the Stonington and Watch Hill lights. With a steady wind, on a fine, clear day, or on a starry night, this channel is an open, gleaming pathway. The tide for twenty hours of the day is racing through it with a deadly force to the helpless, but the course is marked and when all is fair, a bark canoe might skim it safely. But when the wind is strong and the sea high, when rain or fog conceals the lights and buoys, it becomes at once a narrow, tortuous runway between a thousand impending deaths. Then you have your orchestra at play. The wind alone has many voices here. It rushes across the surface of the water with a prolonged hissing, it shrieks about the dormer windows of my cabin, it whistles and moans down the chimney, it whips the green bushes and sings through the stripped branches of the dead wood; it

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passes overhead and through the unimpeded ways abroad, with the roar of an invisible avalanche. My cabin, anchored to the rocks, trembles in its clutching, tugging arms like a wild bird in its captor's hand.

And the water, in a tempest from the north, thunders against the rocks until the island quivers. It washes the ledges, sucks at the holes it has made, gurgles in the crevices, and slips, hissing, back to meet the next billow, as it comes rolling and crashing in.

The roll, the beating, the wash and gurgle of the water, is constant, while the storm lasts. The wind is variable—a moment's violence, a moment's lull. The rain comes with the rush of wind against the windows and sides of the cabin, and when the wind retreats, it falls with a steady downpour upon the roof and water. These are the parts the elements play. But in all this storm, sailing craft and steam vessels are threading the channel with its rushing tide, its rocks and reefs, and through the sounds of water, wind and rain, come the hoarse calls of boat whistles, far and near, the constant warning of the light-ship's bell, the distant bellow of the fog trumpet at Race Rock, nine miles away.

To describe these individual voices or the marvellous effect of their combination, would take a lifetime. Of them all, the most important to me has been the light-

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ship's bell, for it has given me a sound to the quality of mercy; it has made my ear familiar with the spirit of tender, watchful benevolence. For a day and a night I have sat in the midst of a fog so thick I could not see through my window and greedily listened to its tolling. As if rung by a clock, it sounds every minute with three notes, the first two in close succession, the third after a moment's interval. When it is still and the fog lies dense and motionless, these three musical notes steal from it softly, sounding far away through the muffled air. The unseen boats, creeping slowly, feeling their way, call and call again with anxious toots and prolonged whistles, but the bell, neither hastened nor delayed, regular as the throbbing of a steady, wise and tender heart, sounds its mellow notes for all or none. And when the storm is raging and the rain or driving mist obscures the light, its kindly voice flies with the wind or penetrates against it, faithful, sweet and undisturbed. The maker of this bell, by chance or design, fashioned a masterpiece. It is the true voice of Providence. What the shepherds heard on the hills near Bethlehem is repeated for the crew of a coal barge or the belated fisherman, beating against the wind, through the fog or rain, where the tide races through Fisher's Island Sound.

On the fourth morning, we awoke to the sunlight. The storm had swept the atmosphere clean and the air was cool and clear.

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We walked the shores of the island in amazement, the world about us no longer lost in fog or vaguely outlined through the gray of rain and mist. The water was a brilliant blue, rippling and sparkling, like an inland lake. The little houses among the trees on the hills of Noank, the white church, with its spire and golden weather-vane, rose so close to us that we could see the people moving like toys in a cardboard town. A speck of a woman, no larger than a lady-bug, was shaking the bed-clothes from an attic window.

The Connecticut shore was a long, low line of green. Stonington and Watch Hill, white and gleaming, were set between the blue sky and water like painted cities in a fanciful, fairy-like, unreal world.

All day, the sounds of tools upon the oak timber came to us from the shipyard, softened by the distance, and distinct because of its unobstructed way. We heard a snatch of song, a fragment of laughter, the call of a voice. We saw the sea gulls preening their feathers on the rocks of a little island a quarter of a mile to the east. Along the channel of the Sound passed a steady line of ships, and far out to sea were white sails leaning from the wind.

Since that morning, most of the days have been mild and fair. Every moment of the day or night there is a new wonder unfolding before me, if I choose to look.

You may have an island if you will take

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one, but to enjoy it, you must love the wind and the rain, the water and the fog, the sunlight and the tasks of the day.

I have found, in fact, that to be happy and comfortable here, beyond the first few days of novelty, one must possess the spirit to be so anywhere. The requirements are the same, the facilities, of different outward form, are still the same. I loved these surroundings first because they were new and beautiful. I love them more now because they are familiar.

Familiar things are never the same to us. They have a different aspect, a new meaning for every moment. The man who is intimate with his surroundings is never idle. There is no monotony for him. His soul and mind and body must be on the jump. All things shift and change with a swiftness of itself unlimited, and limited to each of us by the measure of our perception. A landscape, an occupation, the routine of a day, becomes most monotonous to him who is most aloof from it, who looks most often at it and sees it less.

I have been on my island for a month alone. I have had my friends here. To me it is always wonderful. I live on two dollars a week and what I gather from the sea. When I am alone, I must be up at sunrise and move briskly to do my necessary manual work and get two hours in which to read or write. When my friends come up, the labor is divided, and I may busy myself

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with neglected things—I may loaf longer, dream more, discuss the world and my neighbors, dispute a bit, take voyages of exploration up and down the Sound, or among the islands, or along the coast. I may some time get beyond Watch Hill and into the ocean. My sharpie is twelve feet long and has a centreboard and mutton-leg sail. It cost me twenty-two dollars.

When I came here in May, I was ignorant of the sea, above and below. I was landed on an island, as barren of the comforts of civilization as a reef in mid-ocean. The problems of food and fresh water, of cleanliness and comfort, were for me to solve. In meeting the necessities of existence here, and doing, with my own hands, the things that must be done if I would live in comfort and plenty, I have crept into an intimate and friendly understanding with the life about me and found my happiness in the common details of my days.

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Chapter II

Chapter II



THREE days of storm had left us on our island with little food and no water. The fourth morning, as I came out early to watch the dawn of a fair day, I saw Captain Green in a row-boat, making for our beach. The water was without a ripple, and the sound of the oar-locks and dipping oars came to me mellow and clear. The Captain threw a net full of live lobsters on the shore and pushed away. I called to him to come in, but he would not.

"No, no," he said brusquely, "I smell of fish. Been hauling up my lobster-pots and thought you'd like some."

I wanted him to come in and talk with me, for to such a man seventy years of life must have brought many events. I knew this much of him,—he had loved his wife and given up the sea for her sake. Rum and tobacco had once been his boon companions, but he had tossed them from him on his wedding day. His wife was dead and when he spoke of her now, it was with a hushed and tender voice, a softening of the eye. He had also spoken once or twice of a wrong he had suffered. I could see that it was a bitter thing to him, constantly present in his mind. But it was

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difficult to break through his rugged personality. He escaped me, as he did this morning, with an act of kindness and a brusque departure. I stood on the beach, the net of lobsters at my feet, until he and his boat, like a speck on the water, slipped into the shelter of his shop on shore. Then, as I stooped for the lobsters, I saw a sail making for the island. It was Ashbey's cat-boat. He brought her about and came ashore, bringing a jug of fresh water, two loaves of bread, a ginger cake and a morning paper.

"I see you're still here," he said cheerily.

"Oh, yes, we weathered the storm."

"My women folks were worried about you."

"I am sorry for that, for we enjoyed every moment of it."

"You don't say so. Well, if you liked those three days, you ought to be happy here. You won't get a spell as bad as that this season."

He spoke so pleasantly that I hated to mention the chimney, but he had built the house for me and it must be done. So, even as I took the water, the bread, the cake and the newspaper, I said:

"The only trouble here is with the fireplace. It smokes."

"It does, eh?"

"Yes, it fills the house with smoke."

His face fell at once and he looked at me anxiously, his eyes filling with the hesi-

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tating, helpless distress of a sensitive child when it is scolded.

"The house itself," I hastened to say, "is perfection. I never saw so strong and warm a cabin."

Instantly, his face brightened and he hastened up the path with me, explaining as we went, just how he had figured on the best location, how he had selected the lumber and used only the best nails, how he had finished off the doors and windows so the wind and rain could not penetrate.

"I thought," said he, "you would want one porch to face Noank, so I set the house for that. I tell you, it's a grand view of Noank from here."

The view I had wished for most was the one across the Sound and out to sea. Noank seemed much too near and I looked upon the porch we now stood on as practically useless. The other side of the house was where I expected to sit. There I could utterly forget, for a season, the world of men, groping, greedily reaching, toiling and contending, and rest my soul in the limitless spaces of sky and water. But I could not tell him this, and it was not necessary, for the porch upon the other side gave me what I wanted, and there were the wide ledges of rock, beside.

"Yes," I said, as he left me, "the cabin is warm and strong. The storm did not shake it."

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"I did for you as I would for myself," he answered heartily.

Glancing at the net I held, he added:

"Captain Green brought you those? You will want to set some pots of your own. You can catch all the lobsters and fish you can eat."

When I entered the house with my booty, Nancy and Elizabeth were descending the stairs, wrapt in their dressing gowns, on their way for their morning bath. I told them of our visitors and showed them the gifts. The lobsters, great green and black creatures, were struggling in the net, clutching at and crushing each other with their strong claws.

"I thought lobsters were red," said Elizabeth, eyeing them askance.

"They are, when they are boiled," said Nancy, cautiously poking one with her finger. "How do you handle them?" she asked.

"I don't know. We must find out. Ashbeay says we can catch all we want if we get some pots. I don't know what a lobster-pot is, nor how to set one, nor what kind of fish are to be caught here, nor how to catch them."

Here we were, in the midst of an unknown world, with plenty about us and everything to learn. From that moment, an eager spirit of industry possessed us.

The girls hurried down to the beach for their bath, and I, taking my towel, went

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to the other side of the island, where the water was deep. I spread my clothes on the rocks in the sun and plunged in. Compared to this bath-room of sky, salt water and great granite border, how poor and little seemed the porcelain tub, not quite my own length, where I had taken my cold bath all winter. A plunge, a stroke or two, and I was out again in the sun, on the warm rocks, tingling and aglow. My clothes seemed never so sweet and wholesome to me as when I put them on after their sunning.

"That beach," said Elizabeth, "will be perfect when a few stones have been removed."

"Yes, that is one of the things we must do."

"How long do we boil the lobsters?" asked Nancy, "and how can we ever get them into the kettle?"

"If it takes very long," said I, "let us have our coffee, bread and butter and potatoes now. I can't wait."

"We have no more butter, and the lobsters ought to be ready as soon as the potatoes are. Come on now, let us try them. We must put them alive in boiling water. I know that much."

When the time came, we untied the net and shook the lobsters on the floor. They immediately backed toward the corner of the room, reaching out with their menacing claws. We picked them up between two

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sticks and dropped them in the kettle. They did not seem to notice the hot water. I was surprised by this, for it had seemed a cruel thing to do, and I had dreaded the moment of their fall into the kettle. But lobsters seem to have no sense of pain. Their one desire is for food. They reach for whatever comes near them and close upon it, if they can. If it be good to eat, they hold fast; if not, they drop it. A broken claw or the loss of their eyes, boiling water, a crushed body, do not cause them a start or quiver.

We allowed the lobsters to cook until the potatoes were done and the rest of the meal was served, about forty minutes in all, and found that we had guessed close enough. It was a grand breakfast, but soon finished, for we now saw a multitude of important things waiting for us to do.

All the driftwood I had gathered was gone, and I went about our shore line to find what the storm had brought us. High upon the rocks was about thirty feet of the railing of a steamer, with its nets of rope clinging to it. A little further was a panel from a state-room and a piece of gilt scroll work. The tide was low, and I hauled this wood well out of the reach of its return. I wondered if these evidences of disaster were from a recent wreck, and scanned the water for further signs. It stretched around me, smooth, still and glossy, like a vast cloth of lilac and lavender satin. The little island, a quarter of a mile to the east,

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that I have named "Ahoy," stood clearly forth, its shore of gleaming sand and rocks like a silver ring, its mound of earth and sod like an emerald setting. Here and there were pieces of driftwood afloat, but almost motionless, for it was the time of slack water, just before the turning of the tide. It was difficult to realize that this placid element had been so wild and terrible but the day before. Here at my feet were the fragments of a strong ship, and the water that had tossed them up would now float a maple leaf without moistening its upper surface.

I found a barrel resting between two rocks at the water's edge, and a little further, a piece of oak and a mass of small sticks and chips. By degrees, I worked around the island and came to the beach. Here I found Nancy and Elizabeth, in their bathing-suits and rubber boots, washing the dishes with sand and salt water.

"Look," said Nancy, "I found it in the sand."

She held up a baby's shoe, a little white kid, soiled and streaked with yellow.

"And here," said Elizabeth, "is the blade of an oar. It must have snapped in the hand of some one struggling with the storm."

She stood up and waved the frying-pan she held toward the water.

"You beautiful, sleek creature," she exclaimed. "I hear your soft purring among

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the pebbles. I see your innocent repose and seductive tints, but what of this baby's shoe and this broken oar?"

"Your pose is very dramatic," said Nancy, scooping a handful of sand for the kettle she was scrubbing, "but the sentiment is too worn to move me. I don't believe there is any malice in the sea. We seem to think it should run with our desires and when it don't, it's a mean, old thing. It seems to me that the sea is a great and noble force, attending to its grand duties in a grand way."

Elizabeth lowered her extended arm, and squatting in the water, renewed her work upon the frying-pan.

"This sand," said she, "is a fine thing to scour with, but salt water don't seem to take the grease off."

"We really ought to have a little more fresh water for washing purposes," said Nancy. "Do you suppose," she added, looking up at me, "that we could have a well?"

"We can't afford that now," said I, "but that was a fine idea of yours about the sea. Men have called the sea treacherous, just as they revile any force they don't understand, and that doesn't always work in their favor. A few thousand years ago there was some excuse for this; then, for men to think about the sea at all was a step in advance. What was then, however, the inspiration of a searching mind becomes now but a



When Work Becomes Play

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thoughtless repetition. For thousands of years we have seen the sea calm and beautiful when the air is still, and we have seen it rough when the wind blows. For six hours the tide flows out, and for six hours it comes in, with such exact regularity that its course can be predicted for years in advance. There is surely nothing underhanded in all that. If it were less to be counted on under conditions as we learn to know them; if it turned, for instance, every time you turned your boat; if it occasionally lay quiet in a tempest and rose in furious white-caps when the air was still, or there was no eruption of the earth to cause a tidal wave, we might suspect it of treachery. Take this broken oar——”

“Yes,” said Elizabeth, “take it and reach me my dish-pan; the tide is carrying it away.”

“And where is my water-pail?” exclaimed Nancy. “It was here a moment ago.”

“I see something off there.”

“That’s it, half-way to Noank.”

“Well,” said I, “we must do some marketing this morning and if we start now, the tide that carried the pail away will help us over.”

I had not yet bought my boat with a centre-board and sail, but was using the sharpie Ashbey had left with me. This was our first trip to Noank, and we were surprised at the ease of our voyage. I rowed

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without once stopping for breath and with no sense of weariness. The girls lolled in the stern seat and I pulled leisurely, even feathering my oars. I watched the receding island with its cabin perched like a bird among the brush, and the glowing, peaceful world of water through which we moved. I was filled with a great contentment and smiled upon the girls, who smiled in answer to my spirit. Following my eye as it glanced beyond her, Nancy turned and looked lovingly at the tranquil scene.

"A dream come true," she said. "I can't quite feel its reality yet."

"And to me, too," I said, "it has a peculiar, dream-like quality. It has always seemed so far away and now it is here. To think that so great a treasure may be so easily possessed. And now to enjoy it, we have only to enjoy the details of life here, supplying such necessities as we may, and forgetting what we must lack in what we can delight in. I have only two dollars a week for myself. That is my limit just now, if I would stay here. What have we to buy to-day?"

"A dozen eggs," said Elizabeth; "a pound of butter, a pound of coffee, a quart of milk, two loaves of bread and a quart of molasses. We all like molasses, and it can take the place of fruit and desserts for us. It is cheap, satisfying and full of food."

"Good," said I. "When we have learned about the lobsters and the fishing, we will

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need fewer eggs. In fact, we can live on fish, potatoes and bread, if we have to."

"Look out!" cried Nancy.

The boat stopped short with a bump, and I was thrown upon my back in the bottom of it, my feet in the air.

"You'll find it handier to go around those things," said a gruff voice close to me.

I got to my seat, rescued the oar that had flown overboard, and glanced at the obstacle in our way. It was a large square box, perforated with auger holes, floating at anchor about a hundred feet from the dock. I turned toward the man who had counselled me. He was a short, thick-set, smooth-shaved, rugged man, standing on the deck of his catboat, a coil of rope in his hand, a number of strange looking objects piled about him.

"What did I run into?" I asked, pushing away from the box.

"That's a fish car," he said. "I keep my lobsters in it till I have enough to sell."

"And what are those things on deck—lobster-pots?"

"Yes; I am going out to the channel to set them."

"How far do you go?"

"My ranges are off Race Rock—about nine miles southwest."

"Must you go so far to get lobsters?"

"To get enough to sell, we do."

"Well, I only want enough to eat."

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" You can drop a couple just off your island near the pole buoy and catch all you'll want."

" Have you got any pots to sell?"

" I might spare you a couple."

" How much?"

" All rigged up with nets, warp and floats—a dollar apiece."

" All right, I'll take them."

" That's my shop by the dock there. Come in when you're ready. I sha'n't start for an hour yet."

The marketing was now of small interest, for I was to plunge at once into the mysteries of lobstering. We postponed our ramble through the village, made our purchases at one store and hurried back to Captain Peterson's shop.

My pots were standing by the door. They were about two feet wide and three feet long, and made of lath, almost the shape of a half-barrel, split lengthwise.

" You throw this back," said the Captain, showing me an opening on the side, " and hang your bait on this hook in the middle."

" The lobsters come through this hole in the end?"

" Yes. Your pot sinks to the bottom. You must set it where there are rocks, for the lobsters come there to feed. They smell your bait and crawl through this hole after it."

I now understood the arrangement of the pot. It was divided into two sections. The

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lobster, entering the open end, would crawl through a funnel-shaped net toward the top and drop through the small end into the bottom of the pot. The bait would then hang just above him, at the opening of a second net funnel. Crawling up this, he would reach the bait. When he had eaten, and was ready to leave, he would find his readiest progress, for the moment, through the funnel, into the second compartment. Here he would remain a prisoner, groping at the bottom and remembering no more the little hole at the top by which he had entered.

"You fasten your warp here," said the Captain, showing me where he had tied the rope to the pot.

"I have given you a hundred feet of warp. We use seventy-five fathoms in the channel, but this will do for you. You fasten this small float about ten feet from the pot to keep the bight of the warp from catching in the rocks, and this large float we fasten to the loose end, so you can pick it up from your boat when you haul the pots."

When I haul the pots! With these words in my ear, I hastened to load the boat and push away. I was puffed with knowledge. The mystery of an hour ago was now made clear. I held the life of many lobsters in my hand, and by another morning I would haul my pots.

It had taken me twenty minutes to row

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over. I expected to return in fifteen, by keeping a strong, steady stroke.

We were scarcely under way when Elizabeth said, in a voice of deep reflection:

“It is hard on the lobster.”

“I have thought a good deal about that,” I replied. “Should we catch a lobster, throw it alive in boiling water and eat it? To answer that, we must solve the whole problem of life. The same questions are involved wherever we turn. Our daily life is one great slaughter. Cows, sheep, hogs and hens fall by the hatchet or the knife. We draw in fresh air and consume it, casting out the stale remains. We ruthlessly haul water from the well and feed our veins. We plant living seed and coax them forth, guarding their life from all else that would devour it until it is ready for our use, when we haul it forth by the roots or mow it from the fields. We devour ourselves. Every pull on these oars destroys a portion of my being, and I cast the refuse from me into the crucible of life, where all things go, from whence all things come. And in all our labor, we destroy before we create.”

“Here are the shipyards,” I continued, as the great, ribbed hulls of barges and floats came into view, and the sounds of mallets, planes and whirling saws, the voices of workmen and the loud call of the bosses, filled my ears. As I looked and listened, I saw the forests that had fallen with their multitudes of insects, flowers,

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and birds, destroyed or driven forth, and I leaned upon my oars, the better to give expression to the thoughts that rushed upon me.

"Here are the shipyards——"

"But the island is over there," said Elizabeth, pointing. "We seem to be going away from it."

I saw at once that we were, and that, though I had been rowing constantly, we were still close to shore.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" I asked, pulling the boat about, surprised at my difficulty in doing so.

"We were lost in the discourse," said Nancy. "Really, now, I'm not sarcastic. I want to catch, kill and eat lobsters, and I was waiting to be justified."

"This boat seems to weigh a ton."

"Perhaps, it's the tide," said Elizabeth.

"It is." Her tone and glance caused me to add: "But that proves nothing. We knew that it would flow this way six hours from the time we started. We don't choose to wait for it, and must take our chances. Are the elements treacherous because our shifting desires take us upon the sea? What nonsense."

But I was through with argument, for, row as I would, we made slow progress. There was a wind now, blowing quite fresh from the east, and this, with the tide, so turned and twisted me that I was compelled to keep my boat several points from its true

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course and to row with all my strength to prevent its drifting past the lighthouse to the Sound. I tugged and puffed, until my face was purple and the sweat ran from me. An hour after leaving Noank, we made our beach.

I hurried around to the rocks and plunged into the water. When I was dressed again, my body rejoiced in the labor it had undergone.

I brought the lobster-pots from the boats and discovered that I had no bait. I did not know what to use nor where to get it. All my boasted knowledge was still of little use, for I had not yet learned enough. I stood for some time, with the empty pots at my feet, lost in reverie.

"And this is why," I thought, "there can be no final conclusion. Any theory of life is necessarily false in so far as it professes a complete solution. There must always be something more to learn. Every seal of finality that we affix is but the arbitrary closing of a path of thought against further perception."

I know that this is an old idea, but it now became my own, and for the sake of it, I was glad to have forgotten my bait.

When our dinner was ready, we spread the table on a wide ledge by the water-side, in the shade of a huge rock. And here we remained for the afternoon, in the cool east wind, sitting now in the shade, now in the warmth of the sun, watching the white sails

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upon the water, and the white clouds in the sky, for it was our first calm, fair day, and the vision was like a thing of magic, holding us irresistibly. And this was not idleness. All the world's activity is prompted by its search for delight, and he who finds it, sitting at his ease, achieves as much as he who opens a new diamond mine.

At sunset, we strolled to the beach, and watched the trembling colors on the water —the crimson and orange glow above the town of Noank. The wind had died away. Row-boats were moving from the shore. The sound of voices came clearly to us.

We looked across the narrow run between us and Mystic Island, and saw a man and a dog standing quietly on the grassy point, watching us. Their figures were vague in the twilight, but I saw the dog's bushy tail move slightly, and there was something decidedly amiable in the man's pose, and in the droop of his wide hat brim.

"Hello, neighbor," I called. He lifted one hand to his head and remained silent. An evil being would have made a sinister picture, standing as he stood in this lonely place; but so truly does the mind and body cast its import abroad that I felt the reason of his presence. He had come to show himself a good neighbor.

"Have you a well?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," came the answer in a soft, full voice, "we have a good well. Come over."

We got our pails and rowed across.

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His name, I learned, was Gibbie Wilcox. With his wife, he kept the island for its owner. They had lived there eleven years. It was a half-mile walk from the point where we beached our boat to his house at the other end, overlooking the Sound. The path followed the ridge of a grassy field, sloping to the water on either side. In the soft twilight, the way was full of a tender beauty. We walked through wide beds of marguerites, and down through a hollow filled with tall, swamp grass. Here was a wild rose-bush, and there a vine-covered boulder.

"I see dandelions," I said. "Can we dig some up for greens on our way back?"

"Now, I'll tell you," answered Gibbie, with the unctuous good-will ever present in his voice and willing eye, "I can show you something better."

He led the way to the edge of the island, and, stooping over, showed us a wild form of sweet pea.

"Just pick the tops," he said, "they make a tender green."

He took off his hat and filled it to its ample brim.

"Gibbie," I said, "I have some lobster-pots. What shall I bait them with?"

"Why, now, anything will do. You can buy bony fish in Noank, or you can use the blackfish and cunners you catch yourself."

"What sort of fish do you catch about here?"

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"Mostly blackfish and cunners now."

"No flounders?"

"It's early for flounders. A little later you can get them right off your island."

"What kind of tackle shall I get?"

"Well, now, I'll fix you all out with tackle—I've plenty of it."

"And the bait, Gibbie?"

"Crabs make good bait. You can get all you want when the tide goes out, under the stones on your beach."

He took us to the well and pumped our water for us. Mrs. Wilcox came out with a loaf of bread and some baked beans.

"Well, this is good for you," said Nancy. "We can't bake in our fireplace, and we have to get our bread in Noank. And the beans do smell good."

Mrs. Wilcox beamed upon us with the friendliest good-will and took Nancy and Elizabeth into the house.

Gibbie got me the fish lines, fastened lead and hooks to them and answered my constant questions with a never-ceasing good-will, seizing every opening for an offer of service.

"Now, you come past here in the morning," he said, "and I'll show you a good place to fish. It's all right, too, out by your pole buoy. There are rocks out there."

"What have the rocks to do with it?"

"The mussels cling to the rocks, and the fish come there to feed on the mussels."

"And the lobsters to feed on the fish?"

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"Yes—that's the way," he replied genially.

He helped me carry the water to the boat, and waved his hand as we landed on our own beach.

"Mrs. Wilcox told me to get her a sack of flour," said Nancy, "and she will bake our bread for us."

My head was dizzy with the impressions of the day.

The stars were out. Under them lay the still sea. The lovers of Noank were abroad in their boats. Deep under the water was the battle for food being fought. What a world of slaughter and good-will, of throat-cutting and kindly deeds!

"What a wonderful night," said Nancy.

"It is beautiful," I replied, "but I am off for bed. In the morning I must hunt for crabs and catch some fish and set my lobster-pots. I, too, will go where the mussel clings."

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Chapter III

Chapter III



No one more ignorant of boats and the water, than I, ever went to live by the sea. I had sailed in many sorts of boats when I had nothing to do but move about as I was told. I knew that there were schooners and barges, and steamboats, and sloops and catboats and punts, and launches, and dories afloat. I could distinguish between a steamer, a sail-boat and a row-boat. Beyond this my knowledge was not accurate. I knew that a small boat with one mast and one mainsail was not a schooner or a barge. If I saw a trim-shaped craft, newly painted, with clean ropes, white sails, easy chairs upon its deck, its crew in clean jumpers, its officers in blue uniforms with gold buttons and braid, its passengers in white duck, I ventured to speak of it as a yacht.

After my arrival on the island, I felt a keener interest in such things. I must have a boat of my own, and I did not know what kind to get. I followed every sail that passed with a speculative eye. What kind of a thing was it? How much did it cost? Could I afford it? It is often hard for me to choose between a calico and a silk. I have seen expensive orchids that delighted me as much as does a sprig of sorrel grass.

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I have two bowls for my bread and milk. One is of delft, ornamented with round-limbed cherubs, young rabbits and listening fawns. It cost quite a sum. I have forgotten how much, for it was bought three years ago. The other one is of common clay. Its body tint is a pale greenish yellow. At the top is a border of impossible terra-cotta daisies. The lower three-fourths is covered with a scrawl in purple and crimson. It cost me ten cents at a Noank store the other day. Compelled to part with one of these, I could not know which to choose. I know that each was fashioned by one who loved his labor and found a beauty in the thing he made. The material of each moved with sympathetic willingness in the potter's hands. The one is small and dainty, the other large and fat and comfortable. On the whole, I think I like the cheap one better. Its gaudy colors, blended by a nature at once tender and jovial, have given the choicest qualities a form in chinaware, and any man, for ten cents, may have it on his cupboard shelf.

Not every boat I saw allured me. The laws of man are his perception of the commercial laws. He reads from the statutes of life, and transcribing what he finds, puts it in his libraries, and is governed by it. All things are subject to the same influences. A boat is as much a created thing as is a man. It has as much to do with its own character as he. I believe that the

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same qualities are found in men and trees, in iron, in cotton and in hemp. The man who fells a forest and takes it to his ship-yard, has to deal with as great a variety of dispositions as if he had carted a city full of people there. Were he to build all his boats upon the same model, each would still possess a personality of its own. The wholesome, happy tree, in sympathy with the sunlight, the soil and the air, friendly with its neighbors, eager to meet and to conform to the changes of a progressive destiny, makes willing timber. If such wood as this be joined by one whose hands are willing, whose eye is fixed upon his purpose, the result must be a willing body for a boat. And if, like this, the sails and rigging have been created from cotton and hemp, you will have as true and fair a creature on the sea as is a tender woman in the world of men.

Boats, both large and small, sailed past my island and affected me as do the cross-grained natures I encounter on the street. And others, large and small, caressed by the waters that bore them, and the winds that blew them on, skirted my island daily, assuring me that the spirit of the air and sea was kindly to the kindly soul.

I had said to Mr. Ashbey when he first brought me over, "I shall want a small boat of my own—one that I can sail or row. I can't pay much for it, either."

"I have a sharpie with a centreboard,"

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he replied. "If that will do, you can have it for twenty-two dollars, sail, oars and all. It is twelve feet long."

"How much would a new one cost?"

"They charge a dollar and a half a foot for sharpies, and if a centreboard is put in, about five dollars extra. The mast and sail and oars would be something besides."

A few days later I saw the boat at his dock. A sharpie is flat-bottomed, square at the stern, and pointed at the prow. It is the prevailing form of row-boat around these waters.

"It will sail very well with a centreboard," said Mr. Ashbey.

It was long and narrow, and not so deep as others I had seen. Its lines were graceful and easy to my eye. It was well worn and scarred in places, a weatherbeaten boat, in fact, but it seemed a friendly, trusting and trustworthy thing to me.

"I think I'll take it," I said, "but I will let you know."

I did not have twenty-two dollars, and I could not buy it then. And that was fortunate, for, in the interval of waiting, I was the possible possessor of every boat that pleased me.

"What kind of a boat is that?" I would ask of a fisherman putting his pots aboard, or of an idler on the dock. For all my asking I have learned little that is definite. The prevailing craft among the lobstermen are from eighteen to twenty-five feet long,

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and from a foot and a half to two feet under water. Some have cabins and some have not. Some have but one sail, and others carry a jib or two. Those with jibs are called just sail-boats, those with only the large mainsail are catboats. Fishing smacks seem to be two and three-masted vessels used only for fishing. They bring their catch home alive, in wells constructed so the sea circulates through them. In these coast towns, a boat is to men what a horse is in the country, a bicycle in the town. Every aspiring youth possesses one or hopes to. If he is of a solitary disposition, he makes a companion of it. If he is adventurous, a leader of aping daredevils, it is his means of sport. If he covets a lady, it becomes the excuse that lovers seem to need.

There are the boats of those who love them, and the sea, and the boats of those who have money, and chance to spend it in that way. There are multitudes who wander to the water-side in summer, in search of the comfort they never find. Since they are here, they go a-sailing, as just a thing to do, and there are boats to carry them.

There is a small, blue, round-bottomed boat with a little square sail, that comes out of Mystic River. Its owner sails alone. It could hardly carry another in any sort of breeze. It moves like a thistledown over a meadow, when the sea is still. It bobs

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merrily in rough water, bowing and curving with the waves and gusts of wind.

I wished to hail the owner and ask the price of such a boat, but I needed one that would carry more and stand a rougher usage. I would watch it come dancing from the mouth of the river two miles away, and circle about the island and return, following every move with wistful eyes, and concluding at the last that Mr. Ashbey's sharpie would serve me better.

A certain catboat I fancied cost five hundred dollars. I asked the price of a long, low-lying yacht that lay by the town dock one day. It was three thousand. I was told that a boat like Captain Green's could be built for eight hundred. It is after a model of his own, and smacks of the ships the Vikings sailed. There is nothing just like it afloat, and never will be. It rides the water with scarce a sound in the roughest seas. The Captain chose every stick of its timber, selected every nail and screw, put every part together, and no hand but his has touched its helm when away from its moorings.

He came about one day in the deep water off the ledge of my island to put me ashore.

"Are there any rocks close in there?" he asked.

"I think not," said I.

He was in the stern, and I was looking into the water from the prow. The boat, headed to the wind, moved slowly to the

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shore. Before I could jump, the Captain had passed me, and leaping to the ledge, caught the boom and pushed the boat gently back. I now saw, a few feet from the prow, a great rock just under the water.

"She has never put her nose to the ground," said the Captain.

"How did you know it was there?" I asked. "You couldn't see it."

"I felt her quiver," he replied, with something like a challenge in his eye.

No, I could not buy a boat like Captain Green's at any price. If I knew as much as he, and would take the pains, if I had sprung from a race of sailors and spent fifty years upon the sea, I might make me one as good.

During most of the month of June, in passing Mr. Potter's house, going to and from a nearby dock, I had seen a good-sized sail-boat, bereft of canvas and rigging, reposing in his dooryard, its mast rising to a level with the eaves.

There are boats that, in such a place, would look like pigs in a parlor, but this one seemed as much at home as did the old yellow cat asleep by the door. One day I saw Mr. Potter painting her.

"What kind of a boat is this?" I asked, laying my hand upon her side.

"She is a catboat."

"Is she a good boat?"

"Yes; she is a good boat."

With paint-brush suspended, he held his

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head a little to one side, contemplating her with an affectionate eye.

“What is she worth?”

“Charley Smith built her for \$180 twenty-five years ago. She might not be worth twenty in the market now, but I would not sell her.”

“Charley Smith seems to make good boats.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Potter, with a nod, “he does.”

Later in the season, I frequently saw Mr. and Mrs. Potter sailing past the island, and it was very evident that their family was composed of three.

I was sitting on my porch one sunny morning. It was a day of unusual calm and radiance. In the city it might be piping hot, but here where the blaze of sunlight was tempered by the moving air, it was bright and mild and tranquil. The sky and water were of a light, clear blue. A few white clouds moving overhead were reflected in the sea. As I followed the dimpling paths where the breeze passed down the Sound, half-dozing in my chair, a sail crept slowly through the run between Mystic Island and my own. It was a little, weather-beaten sharpie, like the one at Ashbey's dock. The prow was out of the water. The stern was sunk within a few inches of its surface, by the weight of a man. He was very old. A white beard fell almost to his lap. Thick, gray hair hung

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below the brim of a high-peaked straw hat with a hole in it. One suspender was over his shoulder. He wore a calico shirt. He was settled far down in the boat, propped comfortably against its back, one elbow leaning upon the tiller that was clasped lightly in his long yellow hand. One leg was crooked upward toward his chin—the overall that covered it rolled above his knee. There was scarce wind enough to fill the sail, but the boat was moving with the tide. As he passed slowly, the old man turned and looked at me.

“Hello, neighbor,” I called.

He lifted an arm above his head, and waved it lazily without otherwise disturbing his indolent repose.

He was about eighty years old. He had, perhaps, never possessed a boat more expensive than this sharpie, with its patched sail. Or, if once a captain of a three-masted vessel, the shifts of fortune had left him only this. Whatever his history or his worldly state, he was surely one whom neither man nor circumstance could rob. “I hope,” thought I, “that I shall sit whatever bark carries me with as much serenity as he.” Long after he disappeared, I practised waving my hand above my head, but I missed the seasoned, wise and roguish abandon of his gesture.

“I think,” said I to Nancy, “that as soon as I have enough, I will get that sharpie.”

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"Please get it now," she urged for the hundredth time. "I have the money."

A few days later, as we were standing on the beach, we saw Mr. Ashbey leave his dock and sail our way, the sharpie with its mutton leg in tow.

"It's a pretty small sail," said he; "but you want it safe at first, and my old one is too large."

He threw me the painter and took his row-boat in exchange. I pulled the nose of my ship to shore and, stepping on board, shoved off.

The mast was about twelve feet high, tapering from two and a half inches in diameter at the foot to an inch at the top. It passed through a round hole at the point of the boat, and rested in a socket on the bottom. It was easy to lift it out and put it in place. The sail was three-cornered, fastened along one side to the mast from the top to a point just clearing the boat, where it was put in place. It came to a point just above the stern, by a long, straight slant down and a slight slant up. There was a small noose fastened to the mast about eighteen inches above the boat. A light pole, pointed at each end, kept the canvas stretched. In making the sail ready after the mast is up, you slip the noose of the flapping point over one end of the pole and push it out until the other end may be fastened at the mast. A long rope was tied near one end of the pole for the skipper to

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hold his sail by. The boat had three seats, a wide one in the stern, another just aft of the centre, and a third one forward. The centreboard was built between the second and third seats. It was a board an inch thick and a foot wide, hung on a hinge in a casing of inch boards. The whole affair was, therefore, a three-inch partition a foot high, dividing the boat in the centre between the two forward seats. The centreboard was lifted and lowered by a wire rod with a wooden handle. The rod was fastened by a loop through a staple on the top edge of the board. When the centreboard was up, a nail put through the staple across the casing, held it so. The rod would then fall back along the top out of the way. To lower the centreboard, you remove the nail, and, holding the rod up straight, push it down until the handle rests across upon the casing. Then you take the sail rope in one hand, avoid entangling your feet in it, and sitting in the stern seat put your other hand on the tiller.

"Now," said Mr. Ashbey, "let's see you beat against the wind."

A light breeze was blowing up the Sound from the south, and I turned the boat in that direction. Presently the sail fell back straight behind the mast and hung over the boat, lengthwise, flapping slightly. I saw that no progress could be made that way. The wind to propel a boat must meet a resistance in the sail. I turned the boat a

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little toward the west, the sail acting like a weathervane, remained north and south. I pulled it toward me so that one side was exposed to the wind. It filled and pulled steadily. It began to move diagonally across the path of the breeze, southwestward. I turned the boat more and more from the wind, experimenting. When the wind was directly behind me and we were moving northward, the sail hung at right angles with the mast. "I will try all the directions," I thought, "and see what happens." Suddenly, as I turned toward the east, the wind hit the sail from behind and threw it over the boat. The rope jerked in my hand, and we tipped a little to one side. I knew that something was wrong. If such a thing happened in a gale, the boat might easily be yanked over. We now moved steadily with the sail to the left of the boat. As we headed more to the south, I had to pull it toward me, so the wind might continue to strike its side and keep it full. When we pointed south again, the sail hung idly for a moment directly over the boat, but as we continued to turn, it caught the wind upon its left side and, filling gently, bore us onward without a jerk. I saw then that the wind cuts the compass in two. You may make all the points of one of its hemispheres with the wind on one side of your sail and all the points of the other with the wind on the other side. Again I brought the boat to

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the west and to the south. Now I saw that if I kept turning, the sail, at right angles with me, would point north and south when the boat was east and west. The free edge of the sail would be southward and, as the wind, ceasing to press it forward, would catch it from behind, it must throw it over suddenly with what force it had. If I wished to go to the east then, I must come about the other way, so the wind would change from one side of the sail to the other, striking it at the mast line first and bearing it over gradually as the boat turned.

"Very good," called Mr. Ashbey. "You must always come about toward the wind. This is the sort of weather for you to practise in."

Nancy was watching me from the beach. I headed my boat her way and came proudly into port.

"And now," said I, "I will take you for a sail."

As I spoke, there was a sharp sound of grating under me, the boat tipped and lurched and stopped a few feet from shore. I had forgotten to raise the centreboard.

"I notice," said Mr. Ashbey, "that this boat you have been using is pretty well worn. You must keep your boat in the water. It won't do to leave it on the beach where the water can rub it in the sand and against the stones. You should fasten it with a long rope to the beach, and then take

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it out beyond low water mark and anchor it with a stern line."

That was a simple and very evident fact, and yet I had not thought of it.

"Is the one you loaned me damaged much?"

"Oh, I can fix it all right," he answered cheerfully; "I just told you, so you'd know."

I heard the soft voice of Elizabeth. Looking up over the rocks and between the bushes that partly hid the cabin, I saw her by a window, singing and sewing.

"Come down," I called, "we are going for a sail."

She looked down at us and smiled and shook her head. When Elizabeth declines to do a thing there is an appealing softness in her dark eyes as if she felt herself a culprit.

"Did you see me with the boat?"

"Yes—you made a pretty picture out there, but you did look very small and the sea so big. I thought you did splendidly."

"And yet you will not come?"

"You and Nancy go."

"You are not afraid for us?"

"I shall be glad when you are back, and I shall be less afraid for you if I am here. If anything should happen, with me aboard, I should only be another danger. I cannot help myself like you and Nancy."

I went up the path and came to the window where she sat.

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"What makes you afraid?"

She smiled cheerily and shook her head.

"I don't know."

"It must make you unhappy then for us to go?"

"Indeed, it doesn't. I want you to go. I know that you enjoy it. I am happier at home with my sewing."

"And you will not be anxious and distressed?"

"If you were gone a long time I might, but I ought not to and so we must not act on that."

"You ought not to?"

"I am happier here. Perhaps that is selfish of me. Shall I come?"

"Not much. What are you making?"

"Sunbonnets. This blue one is for Nancy."

She put a half-finished one of lavender and crimson over her black hair and drew it down under her chin. Her eyes questioned me earnestly, and I could assure her truly that the effect was fine.

"I got the pattern from that sweet old lady where we got the last dozen eggs. I shall finish them this afternoon."

As Nancy and I put off alone she came to the door and watched us round the island and head toward Stonington.

"I hate to leave her there alone," said Nancy, "but it would be a real hardship for her to come. She would never leave the

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house and dooryard, even at home, except to please me."

"We can serve the happiness of others best," I answered, "by being happy ourselves." In a moment more, I should have been lost to my surroundings, hot on the heels of that idea, but I put it aside for another time.

"Teach me to sail," said Nancy.

"I don't know much, but enough for this kind of weather." I gave her the rope and she took the seat in the stern.

"I know the rudder is to steer by, but how do you do it?"

"You move the helm in a direction opposite from the one your boat should go."

"So?"

"Yes. Now fix your eye on a point to make for and keep the prow of the boat pointed toward it. An inch to the right or to the left, is an inch too much. It would mean a mile or more off the course at the other end. We can sail easily in this direction, for the wind comes over our shoulders from behind, athwart the boat and fills the sail pretty full."

"This is certainly a pleasant change from rowing."

"Indeed, it is."

We looked complacently at each other, made ourselves comfortable, peered deep into the smooth water, watched the shore line of woods, and fields, and farmhouses, looked back at the slowly receding cabin,

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and forward passed Latimer's Reef Lighthouse to the ocean.

We were going very slowly, but we were sailing our own boat, and the strangeness of our situation, the little we knew, gave us a sense of adventure and far travel. When we came abreast of Ahoy, the small island a quarter of a mile from our own, we felt like old salts. When this was passed and nothing but water and the lighthouse lay before us, it became from moment to moment a question of how far we would dare to go. The breeze remained light and steady. I did not consider the tide then, but I know now that it must have been with us and when, two hours later, we turned about, it must also have turned, or we would have had trouble in so light a breeze. As it was, we sailed out between Stonington and Latimer's reef, within sight of the ocean swells and returned in love with our little boat, surprised by our seamanship, and ready to assure Elizabeth that, with any care at all, there was really no danger on the sea.

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Chapter IV

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OF course, I knew that our little boat might encounter winds and seas too heavy for it, with the best management, and that I must learn much more than I knew to carry it safely, even in brisk sailing weather. But what its limitations were, and how to handle it, I could discover only by adventure and watchfulness.

We had been here two weeks, going often to Noank, to the pole buoy, to Mystic Island, and occasionally to Ahoy, but there were a hundred places in our circle of vision that tempted us. There was the valley of the Mystic River, leading westward between wooded hills. There were dark recesses in the forest on Mason's Island, three quarters of a mile away. To the north of this was Dodge's Island, its broad, green surface divided into fields by stone fences, its centre crowned with a clump of high bushes. Six miles northeast, on a point of land, lay Stonington, its cluster of buildings lost to us in misty weather, but so clear on clear days that we could see the windows and doors of the houses. Beyond this was a dim coast line, curving away and out, and coming to a point nine miles to the east of us. Here was Watch Hill, the last of land that we could see. Lying between

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the sea and water, so far away, it was a ghostly city through the haze. It gleamed and sparkled in the strong light of fair weather. There have been moments, just before sunset, when a blaze of reflected glory flashed from it. After this came a wide reach of water between Watch Hill and the north end of Fisher's Island. In the centre of this gateway to the ocean, rose Latimer's Reef Lighthouse, a round tower set upon a rock. Whoever looks at this conspicuous object rising from the sea feels some emotion. To one it is beautiful; to one it is austere; for most it possesses a nameless fascination. It is at once a sign of danger and protection; a thing to avoid, if may be; to run to, if you must. In the daytime, it is a strong arm for warning or rescue, raised in a place of solitude. At night, it casts a revolving white light, flashing my way at regular intervals. I have watched it in the darkness for hours, and every moment as it breaks anew upon my sight, gleaming like a planet near the horizon, its reflection, like a string of jewels reaching to my shore, I experience a new emotion, as keen and fresh as all that have preceded it. I am as a man in a strange wilderness, who hears a far call, but knows not whence it comes, from whom, nor what the message is. Perhaps the inhabitants of Mars are sending us repeated signals. But let the wise men read me first this earth of mine. We have not yet answered its pa-

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tient summons. Few of us can speak with all our kind—not one has learned the language of the cricket.

Fisher's Island, forming our horizon to the south, stretches for five miles, its nearest shore three miles away. And all down the Sound are rocky reefs and green islands—points of land by day and their lights by night.

The soul of Nancy is a nomad. Her curiosity is stronger than her fears. Her love of the air, the water, her exploring instinct, are passions. I would have sailed my boat alone until I knew it better, before taking long voyages with her, but she would not let me.

"Where shall we sail to-morrow?" asked Nancy.

We were on the beach, the girls were washing the dishes, and I was standing in the water, near them, holding my bait pail and stooping now and then for a crab that scuttled past me over the sandy bottom, decoyed by the remains of our supper.

I stood up at the question, and looked down the Sound.

"We might explore those rock reefs. Or we might go farther, and visit North and South Dumpling."

"Where the lighthouse stands?" asked Elizabeth.

"That's North Dumpling. South Dumpling you can see close beside it. They must have a surface of several acres."

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"But they seem pretty far away."

"About four miles."

"Why don't you go to the nearer places first?"

"We might go up Mystic River, or over to Mason's. Will you go with us if we don't go far?"

"No, but I can watch you."

"But how about Noank? Will you want me to row when we go there?"

"Of course not. I like to do the shopping, and I wouldn't hear of your rowing when you can sail."

"But it's farther than Mason's, and as far as those reefs."

"I know, but it's different."

"Safer?"

Elizabeth looked at me reproachfully.

"You know I can't reason about such things as you do," she said softly. "I just feel that way about it, and I don't want you to care."

"I don't care. I would give a good deal, though, to follow your thoughts for one day. I would like to understand how your mind works."

"I don't think it works very much," she said, with a merry snap in her eyes. "If it does, it's mighty sly about it."

I gave her up, as usual, and returned to Nancy.

"Why not just go with the wind?" I said. "There will be something to see wherever it blows."

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"We'll just do that. But we must go to Noank first for some groceries."

"And we will need some fish," said Elizabeth. "I took the last one out of the car for dinner."

"We might have some lobsters."

"There are none."

"There were three left when I put the blackfish in."

"I guess they ate each other up. There are some pieces there, but that's all."

I waded out to the fish box, anchored to a stone about five feet from low-water mark, and looked in. I saw five claws and three empty shells.

"That's queer," I said. "I know they eat each other, but there ought to be one left."

I heard a familiar sound on the shore of Mystic Island. Sam, the helper, was making his evening's tour, turning over the large stones, looking for crabs. It was he who had made my fish-car and given it to me. I called to him now and told him what I saw.

"The blackfish ate 'em," he hallooed.

"The blackfish!" I exclaimed. "How could they?"

"You mustn't keep 'em together. *God!* They pick the lobsters' eyes out and then they've got 'em. You must have separate cars. I'll make you another. Say—there was a picnic here to-day—some damned Sunday-school from New London. They

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tore a door off one of the bath-houses. A young woman come up to the well by the house and washed her feet in the water pail and poured it out by the well. *God!* but they make me tired."

"I must come over and see you with one of your picnics, Sam."

"I could tell you enough about these people that go on picnics to fill a book. Mr. Osgood lets 'em come here for nothing, gives 'em everything free—bath-houses, pavilion. *God!* you'd think they'd been coaxed to come, and were mad because they'd done it.

"I caught fourteen blackfish off the dock this morning in an hour and a half. Do you want some? Why don't you come over?"

It grew dark as we talked, and long after his form was lost in the shadow of the hill behind him, his voice came distinctly to me, over the water between us. It would require a good many thousand words to portray Sam's character. Since I have quoted him so far, however, I must add that his "Gods" and his "damns" mean nothing at all. They are what a more careful man's "hems" and "haws" might be.

Sam was once a brick-layer. One day he was on a swinging board, seventy feet above a sidewalk of Providence. His comrade, at the other end, was worried because the rope above was frayed.

"You trade with me," said Sam,

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A few moments after the exchange was made, the rope broke.

"Look out below!" called Sam, and the next he knew, he was in a bed at the hospital, three weeks later. After four months, he was discharged, a man with a weak back. Since then, he has roamed from place to place, earning what he can pick up during the summer, tramping it occasionally, living in the cheap lodging-houses of New York and mixing in the best society of the Bowery during the winter. For three seasons he has been on Mystic Island from May to October, earning twenty dollars a month as helper. He is there to clean up after visitors, and to prevent them from injuring the premises.

"How do you like it here?" I asked him.

"It's all right for the summer," he said. "I like it fine, except for the picnics. The other day a preacher had his church along, and he asked me to cart the things to the pavilion. I hauled seventeen wheelbarrowsful from the pier.

"How much,' sez he. 'A quarter,' sez I. He offered me fifteen cents, and I told him to put it in the contribution box. I'm a Catholic myself. When I come to at the hospital, the priest was there and he sez to me, 'The nurse reports,' he sez, 'that you cussed and damned all the time you've been lying here. I hope,' he sez, 'that you're sorry for that.'

"To hell,' sez I. 'I'm glad I'm alive,'

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"' You had a big fall,' sez he.

"' I did,' sez I.

"' When the rope broke,' sez he, ' did you bless yourself?'

"God! Did I bless myself? I was looking for something to grab to, I was. And what time did I have? If I talked as fast as a priest saying mass, I'd hit the sidewalk first."

"Why did you call 'Look out below?'" I asked.

"So I wouldn't hit anybody. If you're working above, and something falls, that's what you sing out."

"What made you change places with the other fellow?"

"I didn't think it would break and he was nervous about it and I sez to myself, anyhow, if it did, he had a family. God! If I died, they'd have to buy beer to coax enough mourners for a wake."

It will be a great thing to commune with Mars. I hope its people have their eyes our way, and their instruments at work. If excursions land there in my time, I should like to throw my eggshells on its grounds with the rest, but, meanwhile, I am in a world that produces Sam and his picknickers, and I don't as yet know enough of either. And if I went to another planet now, I would leave all these islands and waters and coast lines unexplored, and the mysteries of my own dooryard unsolved.

In the morning, early, we set sail for

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Noank. Our days were always full. I find that I am giving a poor impression of our activity. We were busy then, so busy that we had no time for anything. But in writing of those days, memory takes her ease, idling and dreaming by the way, as one is apt to do when returning to familiar haunts.

"It will take an hour to do our shopping and get back," I said. "If we fish after that, the morning will be gone. Suppose we haul a lobster-pot and see what we get. It might save time."

I spoke the words, although in my heart I did not mean them, for I have learned, and learned it well, that Time is for no man's saving. If any one thinks he has some of yesterday's in his strong box, he is mistaken. He may fill his warehouse and turn the key, but when he returns, the present moment, and no more, is there. But when I talk, I sometimes gabble, helping to keep these empty phrases in use. They serve a purpose in the world, for, without them, there are multitudes who could not speak. Were there no statements ready-made, to be learned by rote, how many of us would be at a loss for an opinion? But, as it is, the world is old, and there are phrases enough coined by now to cover all subjects. One has but to commit those accepted by the society he seeks to be admitted as a proper member of it.

If Sam had chosen the right set, he would not be looked upon as an uncouth ruffian

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by his picnickers, nor would the priest and the nurses have considered him profane, for he is of a kindly, generous spirit, though his thoughts do ramble some. There are many like him on the Bowery—courteous souls, sent into the world with the wrong labels on them, lacking the wit to change them, buffeted and shoved through life third-class, picking up the customs, the language, the manners of their way.

Noank lay directly before us. One of my lobster-floats was visible about a hundred fathoms to the right. The wind was blowing from the north. I had to point close to it to make the float.

"Now, I will show you," I said to Nancy, "how to sail against the wind. By drawing the sheet in, you can keep the boat headed almost to the point it blows from."

"That is strange," said Elizabeth. "I should think it would blow you back."

"No. You see, the sail, fast at the mast, slants a little away from the boat. Now, you come toward the wind just as far as you can, and keep the wind on this side your sail. As it passes over its resisting surface, it must drive it ahead."

While the girls were marveling at this disclosure, I looked about me and saw the island still abreast of my elbow. I watched it narrowly, and discovered that we were leaving it sidewise. A moment later, we reached the channel, and began to move steadily backward. For a moment I was

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perplexed and annoyed, and my face must have revealed it.

"What's the matter?" asked Elizabeth.

"We are drifting. The tide is stronger than the wind, or our sail is too small for this sort of thing. I will have to row."

"Don't you think we'd better go back?"

There was an incipient panic in Elizabeth's eyes, and the sight of it stirred me to angry amazement.

"Why should we go back?" I exclaimed. "Does the mere sight of a sail deprive you of your senses? I must row, but what of it?"

"I didn't know. But you seemed nervous, and it frightened me. Are you sure there is no danger?"

"Good heavens—can't you see? Don't look at me—look at the water. There is hardly a ripple on it. Look at the sky, just a few thin, white clouds. There is not wind enough to move us against the tide. Now, what danger can there be?"

"Don't be so cross."

"But, Elizabeth, why don't you think? Here you are, the victim of a causeless, foolish terror that the faculties of a child might protect you against. It is absurd for you, with eyes to see and a mind to reason with, to abandon yourself to panic without a thought or an effort. *Why don't you think?*"

She was silent and grieved, and I calmed myself. Now, I knew very well that at such

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times Elizabeth did not think—perhaps, could not. I knew this as well as I knew that we would drift with the tide, if I did not row. Why, then, should I be surprised and upset by the occurrence? Why did I scold her for doing what I could expect her to do? Because *I did not think.*

"Come, Bess," I said, "let's be good."

"I will. I was foolish, but it's all right now."

"Just reach it, will you?"

Nancy leaned over the side of the boat and picked the lobster float from the water as we passed it. I shipped the oars, and taking the float from her, caught the rope fastened to one end and hauled it in, hand over hand, pulling the boat forward as I did so, until the hundred feet was in, and we were directly over the pot. Now I hauled more slowly, for it was a heavy pull. Presently the little float that keeps the rope from catching in the rocks appeared, and then the pot itself came to the surface. I reached over, caught it between the laths, and drew it up half-way, until its centre rested on the edge of the boat. Tipping it toward me, I got it in with one good pull. As its lower end left the water, we heard a mighty splashing, and Elizabeth screamed.

"What's in it? What's in it?" she called, scrambling hurriedly over the seat to the prow.

"Sit still!" said I. "You will fall overboard. There is nothing worse than we

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came for here. It's full of 'em. Lobsters and—look at the blackfish! My lord, what a mess."

It was the best haul I had made. There were eleven blackfish, not one less than three pounds, eight lobsters, a great sea eel, and one blue-shelled crab. I took them all out, catching the fish by the gills, the lobsters by the back just behind the shoulders, and the crab by the hind leg, close to the shell. The eel snapped at me viciously, and I had to poke him out with an oar. As I dropped each creature into the boat, Elizabeth, clasping the mast and looking backward, wild-eyed, gasped and lifted her feet nervously. Nancy, her skirt to her knees, was squatted quietly in the stern seat, watching with keen interest and talking soothingly to Elizabeth to calm her fears.

"There," said I, "we won't have to fish for a few days now. That's settled."

We turned about and sailed back to the island quickly, for wind and tide were with us. The fish flopped now and then, but were exceedingly helpless. The lobsters crawled to the shade under the seats and were still. The eel lay on his back and gasped. Elizabeth, seeing that our cargo was so well-behaved, released her hold of the mast and sat down demurely.

"You ought to have your other car," she said, speaking sweetly, but keeping a bright eye on the eel.

"I think I'll sell the lobsters," I said.

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"We don't seem to care for any more just now."

I put the fish in the car, and getting two pails, filled them with sea water and dropped my lobsters in them for the market. I suspected that they must be alive to sell. Then I scrubbed out the boat, and we pushed off again for Noank.

I gave the rope to Nancy, and told her to sit beside me, and sail us over.

"Steer for the church steeple," I said, "and it will guide us straight to the town dock."

She brought the boat to its course and held it there for a moment.

"That's good," said I. "You will make a good skipper."

While I was speaking, she took her hand from the tiller, got up and going to the seat she had left, rummaged in a basket until she found her market list. The boat, left to itself, swung around with the wind and tide, the sail flew over, and catching Nancy's sunbonnet, knocked it into the water. She scrambled back to her seat, pulling at the sail with a senseless jerk and snatching at the helm.

"What happened?" she asked in bewilderment.

"As I remember it," I replied, "you abandoned the rudder, pulled the sail in, and went wandering about the boat. If you are going to sail it, you must attend to it. If there had been a stronger wind—"

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"My sunbonnet!"

"I shall have to row for it. We can't sail in that direction."

I spoke severely, and seizing the oars, brought the boat around and pulled back, making considerably more fuss about it than was necessary. I wanted Nancy to learn to sail well, because I knew she would venture out alone, and I wanted to feel reasonably sure for her. We caught the bonnet as it was sinking, and Nancy once more took the helm. She headed for the church steeple and kept her eye on it until Elizabeth said:

"We ought to have brought some black-fish over for the postmaster and Mrs. Loewey."

"I wish we had remembered it," said Nancy. "She would have been so thankful."

"I have a suspicion that we will get a cake from her daughter to-day. She asked me what kind we liked, and when we would be over again. We must take them some fish to-morrow."

"It's singular that there is no fish for sale in Noank. Every one there seems crazy for it, and they all tell me they can't get any. Why don't they go fishing?"

"Nancy," said I coldly, "why don't you steer for the church steeple?"

She gave the sail a quick pull and looked frantically before her.

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" You steer with the rudder," I prompted. She turned it the wrong way.

" Let the sail out and push the helm from you."

" You take it seriously," she said, looking at me in some astonishment, her clear blue eyes fully opened and questioning.

" It is serious. When you can talk and sail at the same time, you may do so, but you must sail correctly first. You were pointing a good quarter of a mile off the course. We cannot afford to lose an inch. I have been watching the shore line and I see that the tide and wind, going in the same direction, cause us to drift some. We evidently cannot keep a true, straight course when we cut them at all diagonally. We ought to make the town dock without rowing if we head for it steadily, and don't keep pointing away. Now, I would like to see if you can do it."

There was silence in the boat, but we came neatly into port, and as we landed, I looked at Nancy. She laughed and answered my appeal with a free and sincere assurance that she was glad I had insisted.

" I want to sail," she said, " and I mean to learn quickly. Don't you think I did well to-day? "

" You could not have done worse with your chances."

" Isn't he hard on me, Elizabeth? "

" He is a stern master," she replied.

But, of course, you must know that while

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we talked, our hearts were warm and friendly. I was the most serious, for I was determined that Nancy should not rest until she sailed, and while she looked at me with an affectionate, half-rebellious mockery in her eyes, she really expected me to hold her to her task.

I lifted the water pails from the boat, and we walked to the lobster market, a small building on a dock of its own. The buyer looked at my pails and smiled.

"I suppose," he said, "that you fetched 'em that way to keep 'em alive."

"That was my idea."

"Well, you couldn't find a way to kill 'em quicker."

He emptied the pails on the dock and looked at the lobsters.

"Two have gone up already," he said, pushing them one side. "They smother in a pail like that. With no water at all, in a shady place, they would live a long time, but put them in water that has no circulation and it kills them quick."

"That must be why our crabs die so soon in the bait pail," I said, as we came away. "I remember now that Gibbie told me to put a little wet sand in the pail, but I thought sand and water would be better."

At the store, I left the girls to worry the clerk, and going to the rear, got a large soap box and an auger. If I had made me a fish-car the day before, I would have been content with a hole or two in the side, to

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let the water in. Now I knew what the holes were for, and I bored it full of them, on the ends, sides and bottom. I had seen a hundred or more cars afloat since coming here, and I always wondered, as I looked at them, why any one should bother to punch them so generously. I am daily astonished at the stupidity of my gaze. I sometimes fancy I must have the eye of an ox. Things I have stared at for years, and that have remained vague and meaningless, are suddenly revealed to me, marvelous, full of far-leading significance, by a chance word or a chance perception.

While I worked, I heard the clerk say something about a well and a murmur of rapid questions came to my ears. As we left the store, the girls seemed excited. They hurried on ahead, forgetting, in fact, to give me the things to carry. They talked rapidly, both at once. I made no effort to overtake them nor to understand what they said, for I knew I would learn the whole matter presently.

"Isn't it great?" asked Nancy, as we were again in the boat.

"What?"

"Why, the well."

"I heard the clerk say something. Where is it?"

"On Dodge's Island," said the girls together, and then between them:

"There is a well on Dodge's Island."

"And nobody lives there." "Not a

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house on it." "No one near." "And it's splendid water." "We can do our washing there."

"Whoop!" I exclaimed. "That is great."

We looked at each other in silent delight.

"Will you have to row going back?" asked Elizabeth, in real solicitude.

"I think not; the wind has changed a little and is freshening. We can tack toward Mystic and come about for home, I guess."

"If you will take us over there this morning," said Nancy, "Elizabeth and I will have a grand old washing."

"We will take all our things, both washed and unwashed, for even the clean ones need a good, fresh bath. Anything washed in salt water will get damp in damp weather. I have found signs of mould lately, in spite of all our sunning."

The breeze continued to freshen, and we cut across it at a good gait, the rope steady and eager in my hand, the water lapping at the boat with a merry sound. Elizabeth seemed unconscious of her voyage, but I caught a covert expression of appreciation from Nancy now and then.

As soon as we landed, we hurried to the cabin. The girls threw the bedding from the attic windows and I carried it to the boat. Then came great bundles tied in bath robes. We brought pails, a wash-tub that had drifted in one day, soap and ammonia.

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With a boat heaping full, we set sail for our distant laundry. We were in such good spirits that I hated to speak of disturbing things, but I thought it wise to warn Elizabeth of what might come.

"It will be a quiet trip over there," I said, "but if this wind continues, it may be a little rough in the channel coming back. Are you willing to stand it, Elizabeth?"

There was a shade of trouble in her eyes, followed by a quiet glance of courage.

"The clothes need washing," she replied, smiling serenely.

After a thoughtful silence, she asked:

"If there were really any danger, you would wait, wouldn't you?"

"With you in the boat, I will not risk any danger I can foresee."

"Then I will not think about it again, and just take what comes."

"Will you go to Fisher's Island tomorrow?"

"No, indeed. I'm off on duty now. I go where the washing goes, come wind, come waves. It is easier to take the clothes there than for you to carry such quantities of water."

We passed the pole buoy. The island was falling behind us rapidly. The wide stretch of water ahead was deep blue. The ripples had increased to little waves, flashing the sunlight from their restless points.

"I have never seen the sky so clear," said Elizabeth.

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"Listen to the tern," exclaimed Nancy.
"There is one just taking a bath."

"It is diving for fish," I said.

The alert, swift-winged creatures were all about us, and the air was filled with their clamor.

"Do you see that group, dodging and screaming just over Ahoy? If you watch, you will see that four of them are chasing the fifth. He has caught a fish, and they are after it. Poor fellow, he may have been on a hungry hunt for hours, and now that he has got his dinner, he must escape those pirates or lose it."

"And he would pursue another, just as relentlessly," commented Nancy.

"True, true," I answered hastily. "I was not thinking then, but drifting—gliding in a sentimental pose along beaten ways. He is the victim of his disposition, as every creature is."

But I could not speculate with ease while the sail was tugging at me, and the boat was bowing and scraping to the waves. I felt that the wind, the water and my boat were at play, and the thrill of their delight stirred in me.

A sigh came from the forward seat. I looked at Elizabeth, surrounded by her pails, her tub and her bundles, and I saw by her serene eyes and dimpled cheeks that it was a sigh of contentment. She caught my glance and laughed outright.

"It's fine," she said. "I never thought I could be so happy in a boat."

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"Good for Bess," said Nancy.

The sea slapped our boat jovially, and slapped some water in, but we did not mind it.

As we passed the fish nets near Dodge's Island, I saw an old stone pier, and just this side of it, a narrow, circling beach of clear, white sand. I ran the boat on this, and Nancy, jumping out, tied the painter to a stone.

An overgrown path led us to the well on the edge of the bushes, not a hundred feet from the beach. It was an open well, walled with stone and curbed with thick granite slabs. Its mouth was closed by a lid of long green ferns, growing from the inner edge, about a foot from the top. On the ground near by was a long pole, with a piece of rope at one end. I fastened a pail to this, and dropping it through the ferns, let it fall some twenty feet until it struck the water. A pleasant sound of dripping accompanied its return. The first drink was an important event. I put the pail on the curb, and we all stooped over it. As we stood up again, and wiped our chins, we looked at each other shrewdly and smacked our lips. Here was a fine fat cellar for you. The water was cold and sweet.

I brought up the things, the tub and the pails, and as the girls fell to work, retired to the shade of a sumac bush to reflect and smoke.

Far out over the water, I saw the flashing

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white wings and breasts of innumerable tern, and the full, white sails of the boats of men.

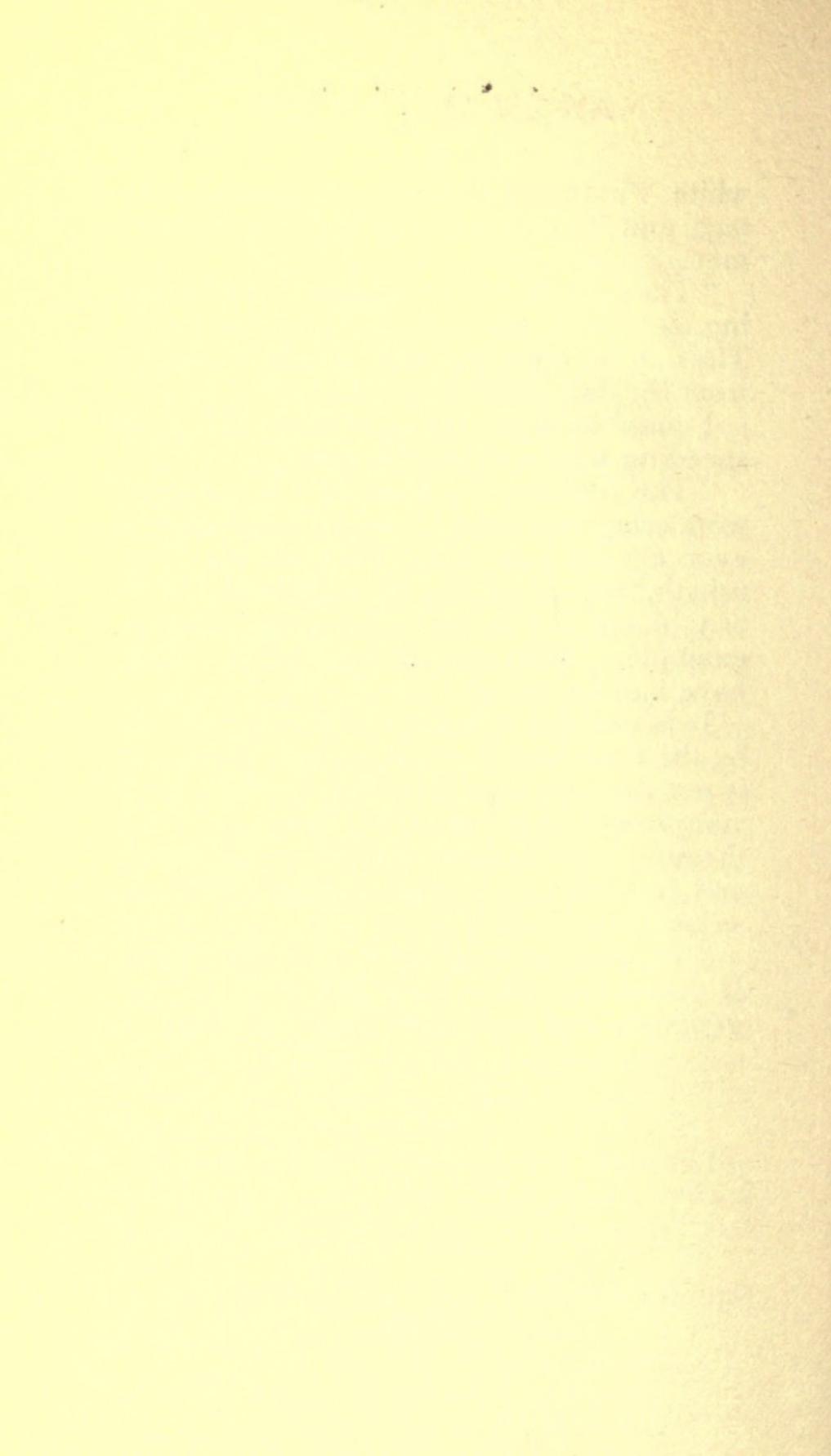
"Those smacks," I thought, "are hurrying to New York. Anxiety is at the helm. They must compete with the fast freight from the fish markets of Boston."

I could hear the far-off rumble of a train speeding south, along the coast.

"The engineer," I thought, "is, perhaps, wondering if it pays to strike. I wonder if ever a tern has said, 'Give to him that asketh,' and if so, was he crucified? Who can blame the tern? They have had no example. Who can blame men? They have had too few."

It is not through cowardice, for men die by the thousands for what they believe. It is not through unwillingness, for they have ventured most for the Holy Grail, and even through cruelty and avarice and cunning and desperate endurance, they are still pursuing or defending it.

"We receive what we inspire, Mr. Tern. If you would have your fellows kind and generous and just, show them the way."



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Chapter V

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WHEN we returned from Dodge's Island with the washing, there was not a breath of wind. We waited for the tide and drifted home, keeping to our course with a lazy dip of the oars now and then. The weather during these June weeks had been mild and fair. None but light winds blew, and they were quickly spent. We had forgotten the storm that had greeted us in May and had not yet experienced the sudden squalls that sometimes break through here, lifting the water into waves, darkening the heavens, and driving the stanchest boats before them helpless. I have been told that we ventured too much in our little boat. Perhaps we do owe our safety to the even weather that attended our first experiments, but we surely owe the delight and fullness of our days to fearlessness. If a tempest had overtaken us, we might have learned more rapidly, or we might have drowned. Whatever death awaits me, it shall come but once. I think too well of life to hamper and dis-color it with nameless fears.

We busied ourselves in doing what we wished to do, and in preparing for our ventures with all the wit we had.

"Perhaps," said Elizabeth, "I shall not

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be afraid to go sailing with you after this."

We were spreading the wet clothes on the rocks to dry.

"As soon as we are through with our work," I said, "we will go bathing, and I will teach you to swim."

Elizabeth stood up suddenly, holding an end of a sheet suspended, and looked at me curiously. Her face was dimpled, her mouth smiling, but in her eyes was a wavering shade of alarm.

"Why must I learn to swim?"

I wish to be frank and direct with every one, and I strive to be so, in spite of the fact that a veiled purpose often wins its way more rapidly because it is unseen.

"If you are around the water, you ought to swim. If you go much in a boat, it is necessary."

"You hear that, Nancy? He admits that it is dangerous. I guess I'll stay at home."

"Oh, come, Elizabeth. He only wants you to make the thing more safe. I should think you would like to learn. I am going to keep at it every day from now until I can swim a mile."

"You could do that now," I said, "if you would only think so. It's your fear that undoes you. As soon as your feet are off the bottom, you begin to worry. You wonder how deep it is now. You fancy yourself drowning. Your mind is struggling

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with imaginary conditions, and you involuntarily put forth all your effort, when a very little would be better. Your nerves are taut; your whole being strained and apprehensive. This is what exhausts you."

"I will try," said Nancy, "to take it easy."

I looked at Elizabeth, and saw that my harangue had only increased her uneasiness. The picture was very real to her. She saw the frightened creature I had drawn, and her large, dark eyes were fixed upon herself straining and struggling and sinking in the sea. Nancy saw her expression, and reaching out quickly, caught her by the arm. "Saved!" she cried. "Here you are, safe on land." We all laughed together, and the spell was broken.

There is something in me that protests at subterfuge. I would not gain my point with anyone by deceiving him, or by calling in irrelevant influences. I love a sane and reasonable mind, and seek to address myself to that. To win another to my ways by artifice is no comfort to me. It is not "my way" that delights me, but the beauty of it. If another knows a lovelier one, I am eager to exchange. If my own is to be followed, let us see the true reason for it and walk with open eyes.

Nancy is not so particular in this. Were she to find a magician's wand, she would hide it up her sleeve and with its aid set the world a-dancing to her will, without a

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qualm of conscience. It is true that could she do this, it would be a merry, wholesome, generous world, as merry as a poet's May day, as wholesome as air and water and sunlight could make it; as generous as the love we wish for.

But how pitiful the relapse would be if Nancy lost the stick!

Before I could speak again, Nancy, looking placidly before her, said softly:

"How still and beautiful it is to-day."

Elizabeth followed her gaze across the water, and her face grew tranquil.

"It seems foolish to be afraid," she said.
"It does look harmless."

I left the girls together and went to the beach to clean the fish for dinner. My spirits were disturbed and I was ashamed of them. Presently Nancy came down with a pail which she filled with sand.

"Elizabeth is all right," she said cheerily.
"She is going in with us off the rocks to-day."

"She is not all right," I replied seriously.
"You have induced her to follow us with her eyes shut. It will bring trouble."

"No—I just soothed her alarms by getting her to look at the quiet water. You know that she takes things very calmly as a rule. I am sure she will be all right."

"She is learning to swim because the sea is tranquil, and she can overlook, for the moment, all necessity for swimming. How illogical! It makes me shiver. If she

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learns in that spirit, she will only tempt disaster. We will rely on her and venture too far on an illusion. If we were capsized out there in the Sound, when the waves were rolling and the wind howling, the terror she has not destroyed, but just turned her back upon, would have her by the heart, and all she has learned would be useless."

"Now, you know that Bess keeps her head better than most people."

"She is not frightened by many things. But what would she do when frightened? The test lies there."

"She is going into the deep water off the rocks to-day. I think that is pretty brave."

"It is the folly that would naturally spring from her false attitude. Those who won't look frankly at a danger are often inclined, on an impulse, to jump blindly into it. She should go into the shoal water here on the beach until she can swim a little."

"Please don't have her do that," said Nancy coaxingly. "She is anxious to go in off the rocks, and if you won't let her, she might never learn at all. Be good now. Leave your old reasoning alone and be good."

"All right," I said, made light-hearted and reckless by her bright eyes and coaxing voice. "Off the rocks she goes."

Nancy took her pail of sand up the hill and returned for more. She was making a path around the house. I heard the sound of the hatchet as she chopped away the

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brush, and of the spade as she filled her pail with sand. She came and went, her active, sturdy body warming the atmosphere about me, enlivening it with her own superfluous vitality. I suppose that Nancy, when she sings, has a queer, little, squawky voice. She says so, and I guess she has, but I love to hear it. Her only song consists of two lines. It is a fragment of the Punch and Judy show:

*“ ‘Tis the law, ‘tis the law,
And the duty of the old turn-kee.”*

Whenever I hear this fragment borne to me from the beach, the bushes, the kitchen, from off among the rocks, or from wherever Nancy is busy, there is a soft echo in my heart. The sentiment of the song is the one most repugnant to me, but I only smile at that, amused and charmed by the incongruity. These lines upon her lips are a signal of happiness and liberty. They are the mis-begotten offspring of a spirit as tender and lawless as they are austere and terrible. You should hear her piping voice proclaim them, and smile with me at “The law, the law, and the duty of the old turn-kee.”

I carried the fish to the house, going the long way around, at Nancy's request, to walk upon her sandy path. She watched me proudly.

“ This is great,” I said.

“ Isn't it glorious? How I love to do it!”

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She held the hatchet in her small, strong hand, scratched, sunburned and dirty. She wore a bathing suit that had cost a good deal in her stylish days. Her plump, bare arms were brown and brawny. Nancy is only four feet ten and one-half, and weighs a hundred and ten pounds. Her shapely, buxom legs were thrust into rubber boots. Her freckled face and fine blue eyes were aglow with enjoyment.

"I want you to look at the things that grow here," she said. "In cutting this path, I have come upon laurel and barberry bushes, wild raspberries, wild rose and all sorts of grasses and shrubs I don't know. You can't see through the jungle around me, it is so thick and tangled."

The house was enclosed by a forest of sumac and a network of grasses, vines and bushes. Through it all, rose the tall stalks of a flowering weed with a flat bloom, as large as my hat and as white and delicate as the elderberry.

"It seems to me," I said, "that I see poison ivy in there."

Nancy's eyes sought mine for sympathy.

"Yes," she murmured pathetically, "the place is full of it. It is everywhere. I found signs of it all over me this morning. I will be one burning blotch in a day or two."

"That's what's the matter with my hands. They prick me."

"I didn't want to mention it," she said apologetically, "but what can we do?"

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"Tear it out by the roots and pour salt water on the ground."

"It seems too bad to do that. It is very beautiful."

"Here is a vine by the porch."

"Here is one at my feet."

"Here is one—and another. It is springing up all over the dooryard."

"It is everywhere."

"We would have to strip the island bare and spade its entire surface to get rid of it."

"Never! I would not remove our jungle or mar its beauty if it killed me. We seem so sheltered and alone in here. It smells so good. And look at those great blossoms."

"And our birds would leave us."

"We will keep the ivy. Elizabeth and I have put bread on the roof and the rocks and among the bushes. I think the birds will stay."

A number of song-sparrows and two blackbirds with red epaulets had been our daily visitors. They came in sunshine, wind or rain, and sang to us constantly. We had seen them swaying on the tops of the bushes in the driving storm. Through the night, at intervals, we heard the sweet, clear carol of the song-sparrows. We had been careful not to frighten them at first. We had fed them, and they had at last accepted us and our huge nest in good faith.

"That is settled," said Nancy. "We will not disturb the jungle."

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She picked up her pail and went for more sand, unconsciously piping:

*"'Tis the law, 'tis the law,
And the duty of the old turn-kee."*

I stood and listened until she had reached the beach. Another voice, humming very softly, came to me from the cabin. I went inside and gave my fish to Elizabeth.

She was squatting before the fireplace, trying the potatoes with a fork. Her face was red from the heat of the flames. The smoke came out in puffs and enveloped her. Between gasps, she was humming a tuneless melody, now and then putting in a word or two. I heard something about "Boys and Girls of the Emerald Isle" and "Dancing on the Green." She took the blackfish, dipped them in flour, and put them in a frying-pan with a piece of salt pork. She raked out a heap of coals and set the pan on them.

"You can cook very well by a fireplace," she said, wiping the mist from her eyes.

"I must get the chimney fixed."

"It would be nice."

She put five heaping teaspoonfuls of tea in the pot and placed it near the fire to heat. Then she took the tea-kettle from the embers and poured in the boiling water. Going to the window, she leaned out and sent forth a musical summons, three notes, such as we use these days for a call. There was an answer like an echo, from the beach, and

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up the path, and around the house, came the plaintive piping sound of,

*"'Tis the law, 'tis the law,
And the duty of the old turn-kee."*

Nancy came in, kicked off her boots, put on a pair of gay red slippers, and pulling the table from the corner, carried it to the door. I helped her through with it, and we placed it on the grass in the shade. I stood near by, while she brought the seven-cent knives and the five-cent spoons and forks, the agate-ware plates and cups, the fifteen-cent sugar-bowl, the butter on a wooden dish. I heard the fish sputtering. A delicate odor filled my nostrils. I sniffed and looked greedily inside at Elizabeth by the fireplace. My whole being yelped for food and my soul laughed and licked its lips over the sauce of good cheer in which the feast was served.

When the meal was over, we worked for an hour that it might digest before the bath. Nancy combed the beach and Elizabeth helped me make a raft of planks and logs that had drifted in. When this was finished, I tied a long rope to it, fastened it to the boat, and towed it around the island to the deep water, and throwing the line onto the ledge of rocks, fastened it to a small boulder.

I got a rock weighing about fifty pounds and tying twenty feet of rope to it, dropped it overboard thirty feet from shore and anchored the raft to it.

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"Now, Nancy," I said, when we were ready to swim, "you first."

Nancy knew how to swim, but not easily. She could take ten or twenty good strokes and was through. The girls had never been in on this side, and they stood staring at the deep water, as if it were a new, strange sight to them.

"How deep is it?" asked Nancy.

"I will talk about that some other time," I replied. "It is not to the point now."

"Shall I jump right in?"

"Dive."

She stepped to the base of the ledge and stood on a ridge near the water.

"So?" she asked, lifting her arms above her head.

"Yes. Be sure and go in head first. As soon as you are under water, point your hands up and that will bring you to the surface."

She shut her eyes and mouth very tight and fell forward, striking on her face and stomach with a loud splash. She came about and made hurriedly for shore, sputtering and gasping, her eyes very wide.

"It took all my breath," she panted as I helped her out.

"You knocked it out of you. You must give a little jump and throw your head down. Get your head in first. Just think of that."

"How deep is it?"

"Nancy!"

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"Are you sure I will come up?"

"Now, you jump in there, head first. Get your head in. Think of nothing but that."

She leaned over and jumped, and I shouted: "Get your head in there."

She made a good dive this time and came up smiling.

"How was that?" she called, turning for the shore.

"Fine. Don't come back. Swim out to the raft."

She turned about and began to work hard to make it.

"Take it easy," I called. "Go slow. Breathe naturally. You have all day to get there. Just loll along. Have a good time with the water. It will do all the work if you will let it."

I could see that she relaxed and that her strokes became slow and effective. She reached the raft and climbed on it.

"I guess I'll strike out and see how far I can go," she said, with shining eyes. "That was easy."

"Just swim back and forth until you can go and return ten times without stopping."

Then I turned to Elizabeth.

"Shall I dive?" she asked quietly, getting close to the edge.

"Not to-day. You must swim a little first."

"How deep is it?"

"That has nothing to do with it. If you

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will lie quietly on your back, your arms stretched out, your chin up, you will float indefinitely. Wait a minute and I will get you a board. You can fool round with that until you have learned to kick and float."

I got a plank eight feet long and a foot wide, fastened it to the rocks by a long rope, and threw it in the water. I led Elizabeth to the edge, let her down, and brought the board in to her.

"Now, hang to that and thrash around. You will soon get acquainted with the water."

"Oh," she called, clutching the board and struggling to lift herself from the water, "Oh, dear, what has happened?"

"Your feet are coming to the surface on the other side of the board. Don't lift yourself up. Lie back quietly; lie back! There you are. Now, just touch the board lightly. You see how easy it is to float."

"But I can't get my feet back. I can't do anything."

"But you can't drown if you lie still. I want you to realize that."

She smiled up at me sheepishly.

"You seem to be afraid because you aren't sinking."

"I'm not afraid."

"All right. Now, kick your feet. Kick them hard and bring them under you."

She kicked and laughed gleefully, as they came under and then up behind her.

"Now keep on kicking and push the

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board along. Let yourself down in the water. Throw your head back. Nothing but your face out of water."

She kicked and pushed, and presently the board was at the end of the rope, near the raft.

"That's fine. Now, come back."

"What's the use?" she asked. "I'm attached to the place."

She laughed and wiggled her feet at me as they came above water on the other side of the board.

"This is my fourth trip," called Nancy. "I'm not tired at all."

"Turn over on your back."

There was a scream from Elizabeth. I looked with a start and jumped to my feet. She had put her arm over the board, and catching its edge, drawn it toward her, turning it over. She began at once to clutch and struggle and scream. Her face was turned toward me, very beautiful in its terror, but very wild and frantic also.

"Keep still," I shouted.

As the board turned on edge, she lost her hold and snatching it again, lifted herself up and screamed. As it came over on its flat side, she reached across it, and seizing the far edge, pulled it over again. She was working like mad and the board turned swiftly.

"Don't throw your arm over it," I called.
"Be quiet and listen to me."

She paid no attention. It seemed that

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she would surely let go and in her wild thrashing, she would choke in the water and go under. I knew that if I could not get her attention, it would be impossible, perhaps, to rescue her, for she would snatch at me and struggle until I might go with her. If she would become sane again, she was safe with her board. I made ready to plunge in, and as a last resort, I shouted again to her.

"Be still, Bess. Be still. *Be still, you damned fool.*"

She stopped in the act of a lunge and scream. Her mouth remained open, but no sound came forth. A look of surprise and resentment replaced the wild panic in her eyes. The board lay quiet, on its broad surface.

"Now, just hold it lightly, your hands on the edge nearest you. I will pull you in."

I took the rope and drew her slowly to the rocks. She came out and went to the house without a word.

"She is not angry, is she?"

"Well," said Nancy, climbing out, "you know that *was* a hard thing to say to her."

"Good heavens, Nancy!"

"I know you meant it all right."

"Never mind," said Elizabeth softly. She had returned at once, and as I looked around, I met her eyes, warm and forgiving.

"If I could have thought of anything to shock you more, I would not have shouted what I did."

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"Come in again," said Nancy.
"I am afraid."

"Well, come in on the beach, then," I urged. "Don't stop with this experience. If you will only think of the water in a friendly way; if you will trust yourself with it and just do your part for the simple thing it is, you will be as safe in the water as out of it."

We went to the beach, and I got her to lie on her back and float by holding my hand under her shoulders. I stepped away and left her alone.

"Just keep your head back and breathe naturally. Hold your arms out straight. You see, you cannot sink unless you do something to make you."

For a few moments she floated quietly, laughing like a tickled child.

"Now, Nancy, swim out as far as you can go and I will rescue you."

I could rely on Nancy to keep outwardly cool and to do as I told her, and I could venture a long ways with her.

Suddenly Elizabeth cast a frightened glance my way and called out:

"Where am I floating to? How deep is it here?"

In a moment, she lifted her head. This, of course, threw her body under. She made a great lunge and began to splash and cry out, swallowing water and gasping. As she turned over, she hit the bottom with her hands and knees. It was not two feet deep,

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but in her excitement, she fell forward, and head and shoulders disappeared. She got to her feet, choking.

"If you tried hard enough," I said, "you could drown yourself in your dish-pan."

"I thought it was deep."

"And so you did your best to sink? Do your thrashing and screaming in shoal water. If it is deep, you should do the little that is required of you to keep on top."

"If you are going to be so cross all the time, I'm going home."

"You are going to swim first," I replied severely.

"Come on, Bess," coaxed Nancy.

"Walk out up to your shoulder with me and swim in. I'll hold you up."

She came unwillingly, but I was determined now.

"You see you can hardly walk here. You could float more easily than you can hold yourself down. The whole thing is this: If all the rest of your body is under, and you keep it full of air by breathing, it will become very light and your mouth, eyes and nose will remain out. If you are afraid to let yourself down and try to keep too much of you above water, you just douse up and down, and your whole head goes under. Then you gasp and scream and choke and drown. Now, relax. Put your arms out and lie forward. Get under water. Let yourself down. Throw your head back and turn your face to the sky. Let the

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water come over your neck to your ears and chin."

I held her by the shoulders until nothing but her mouth and nose were above water. Then her feet left the bottom of their own accord.

"Kick!"

She did so, and they came to the surface.

"Keep on kicking and move your arms. Bring your hands together at your chin; palms out, so. Then, reach forward, keeping them just under the surface. Reach way out. Look at the church spire at Noank, give a kick, and try to grab it with your hands. You see that takes you forward. As soon as your arms are straight before you, your hands back to back, bring them around in a strong, circling sweep and in to your chin; then, straight before you again, with a reach and a kick."

As she did this, I took my hands from her shoulder and placed one of them under her chin. She took ten strokes correctly, and I stepped away. She took five more alone, and stood up.

Nancy was a hundred feet from shore, swimming steadily toward the bush buoy. It suddenly occurred to me that she would reach the channel soon, and I was not sure what the tide would do with her.

"Don't go any farther," I called.

She did not hear me, and I swam out to her. The drift of the current was apparent before I reached her.

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"Better turn around and come back," I said quietly. "This is far enough to-day."

"How easy it is if you take it so," she said, taking a mouthful of water and spouting it out again. She came around and I watched her covertly. She made no progress against the tide.

"I will show you how to be rescued," I said.

"I know."

She put her hands lightly on my shoulder and I began to tow her in.

"Take a firmer hold," I said. "I want to give a stronger stroke and you might slip off."

It was all I could do to breast the tide.

"Better kick a little," I said. "The current is strong here."

"I see it is," she answered pleasantly.

"You are all right," I said, as we made the beach. "You can swim well enough to get onto the bottom of the boat if we capsized and Elizabeth would be able now to keep afloat while I got to her. In a few days, she will swim well. When you can take five strokes right, you can take five hundred, if you will go easy."

"I'm glad you kept at me," said Elizabeth, with dancing eyes. "I will surely learn to swim." She waded out as far as she could go, and came back successfully, with good, even strokes. "Let's go off the rocks again. I'm not afraid."

"To-morrow."

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"Isn't it fine when you're not afraid?"

"There can, at least, be no terrors for us if we are not afraid."

"Another day gone," said Nancy. "Just think of it!"

"How fast they go."

"The city is coming too near. Next week I must mix in the crowd and listen to the din and wear long skirts again. How I hate it!"

"You look it," I said reproachfully.
"You are not pleasant to see just now."

"I know. But there are no mirrors here, and I forget. But I do hate it."

She smiled, and her words, spoken softly, lost their sting.

"You are not thinking of it now, but of yourself and me, and the kind of spirit you prefer. If you hate the city, it will hurt you. If you don't think of it at all, it is four days from you. Don't bring it to you now."

We sat upon the beach, when the girls were dressed, and watched the boats of the lobstermen sail up the Sound, past Long Point and into the harbor of Noank. They came home as the sun was setting. We returned to the cabin in a tranquil mood. As we walked up the path, I reached among the bushes and smiling to myself, patted the leaf of a vine. We sat upon the porch for a long time, silently listening to the murmur of the jungle.

"Do you know, Nancy," I said, at last,

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"I think we might make friends with the ivy and it would not harm us."

"Do you really think so?"

"I do. I shall talk to the poison that is in me when it itches and it will go away. I believe that these vines, if they could understand that no harm was intended them, if they could feel that we loved them and wished them around us for their beauty's sake, would, of their own act, restrain their poison. This is probably impossible, but I am sure that if we do not fear it, nor look upon it with malice, if we think of it always in a frank and friendly way, we will render it harmless. A sane mind, fearless and friendly, is a preserver of health. We are inclined to smile at each new application of this old truth, for it is easier to be sceptical than to experiment; to O. K. a sentiment than to apply it."

"I hope," said Nancy, "the ivy has ears and will remember my sentiments to-day. It was I who spared it."

"You forgot the boat again," said Elizabeth suddenly. "The stern line, do you call it?"

I got a rope from the cabin, and going to the beach, found a great stone that would suit me. It was square and the rope would not slip off. It was so heavy that I had to pry it, foot by foot, to the water, but I knew that a boat anchored to this would not drift, and the hard tug now would bring me an easy mind when the wind and sea

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were high. When it was well in the water, I could move it with my hands. I worked it fifteen feet beyond low water mark, and went for my boat. It was held to the beach by a long rope, but unless I pulled it high on shore, the full tide washed it about, wearing it against the rocks and sand. If I did, it was hard to push it to the water when the tide was out.

I brought the stern to where I thought the stone was sunk. I groped about in the water for the rope, but could not find it. "This will be a wet job," I thought. "On a stormy night it would be hard to do." I found the stone at last, and picked up the rope. I had to put my head and shoulders under water to reach it. "If the rope would only float!" And then it occurred to me to fasten its end to a stick that would float. I got a lobster float from a pile of driftwood on the beach, and carrying it out, ran the rope through a hole in the end, pulled it through for about two feet and tied it. The float was large and white, and I saw I could find it in the dark and pick it up easily. The loose end of the rope I fastened to a ring in the stern and came ashore. The boat seemed very comfortable as it rode the water safe and clear of land.

"Now," I said, as I looked back upon my job, "I shall rest easier for that."

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Chapter VI

Chapter VI



WHEN we say we shall rest easier because of this or that, we speak foolishly, for we do not know. Most of us pass through life missing its significance, because we do not seek it. We look upon it in a greedy spirit, fretting at the moment if it brings us something to do, and if we are hopeful, anticipating the future only because we fancy it will somehow shape itself to our vague and selfish whims. The value of to-day, and in the thing we do, lies in itself, not in what it may bring to us. If we work now that we may rest some time, we will find a fitful pleasure in our work, and in our time of rest. In toil and idleness alike, we must form our beings to joy or misery. If to-day brings us labor, and we delight in it, we may delight in rest if to-morrow brings us that.

In the night, a wind from the south blew up the Sound and tossed the waves upon my beach. When I am awakened by wind and water, I am glad to listen, in a partial doze, until lost in sleep again. But now, with the gust and splashing, there came a dull pounding that disturbed and fretted me. It was the voice of a thing gone wrong. I tossed and listened, until wide awake, and I understood at last that the

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lobster float, from which I had expected so much, was beating against the boat. As the waves increased, the violence of the blows redoubled. I passed the night in restless tossing, now wondering if it could batter a hole, now trying to force myself to go down and unfasten it, now vainly seeking for some way to correct the faults in my device. If I used a small stick, it would be hard to find in the dark. I left my bed in the morning with heavy eyes, and went to the beach to solve my problem. The wind had moderated, but the waves were still restless. The boat had a badgered look. It was scarred about the stern, but not injured much. The violent pounding had softened to a dull rapping. I had no particular plan, but I threw off my bath gown, and wading out, picked up the float and held it for a moment idly.

"I will get more rope," I thought, "and see how that works."

As I dropped the float, it occurred to me to place it in the boat. I did so with a thrill of amazement. I looked at it reposing quietly on the stern seat. If I put it there when I fastened the boat, there would be no trouble. I returned to the cabin, chagrined and pleased.

"Why are you astir so early?" Elizabeth called from the attic.

"Did you hear that thumping through the night?"

"What thumping?"

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"I did," said Nancy. "What was it?"

"Come down and I will show you."

I hurried to the boat again, and put the float in the water. When the girls came down, I pointed to it.

"The waves were beating it against the boat."

"It was pretty bad," said Nancy. "Can't we fix it?"

"That's what I was wondering all night. How would you do it?"

"You might nail a stick to it and have some way to fasten it to the boat and hold it off."

"What do you think, Elizabeth?"

"Won't that way do?"

"I don't know how you would fasten the other end of the stick to the boat so it would hold and come off easily. Do you?"

"I suppose we could get used to it in time," said Nancy cheerfully.

"It will hurt the boat, I'm afraid."

"Would a smaller stick do?"

"That's as near as I got last night," said I, "but if you will look the other way, I'll go in and fix it while you wait."

They turned their backs, and I waded out, put the float in the seat and returned to my wrapper. They faced about again and looked. We laughed in glee and marveled at our simplicity.

"And yet," said Nancy, "just think how long men saw the apples fall and the steam lift the lids of kettles."

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"And," I added, "we have not yet ceased to grumble at our difficulties as if they had a will to spite us. That is the greater blindness."

"There is a good wind to-day," said Nancy. "Where shall we go?"

"We might make those rocky islands and from there go down to the fish hawks' nest off Long Point."

"Way down there?" asked Elizabeth.

"Then we could cut across the Sound. There is a little island, I am told, near South Dumpling where all the tern around here go to breed. I would like to see that."

"Good!" said Elizabeth, with genuine pleasure. "This will be a fine day for me to kill bugs. I shall have the house to myself, and I will spare nothing that crawls or spins webs."

We had been surprised by the great variety of familiar insects on our island. When we first came to the empty cabin, in May, we saw nothing but the birds to welcome us. "It will be a comfort," Elizabeth had said, "to be rid of ants and cockroaches. In the city, you must guard against them constantly." A few days later, she found the sugar-bowl full of ants that had crawled in under the lid. In walking through the jungle, we discovered hundreds of spider's webs, and one morning we awoke to find them sparkling in dew and sunshine on every bush about the cabin. A number had found their way in-

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side, and occupied the corners and the spaces between the rafters. We swept them away, but by night there were twice as many. It became our custom before retiring to hold our candles under the spiders above our beds, burning them in the flames. It was not a pleasant deed with which to end the day, and I finally ceased to slaughter them.

"We know nothing of these spiders," I said to the girls, "and if they do us no harm, why should we pursue them? Because they are here, the birds come. I cannot judge between them and the birds—that is beyond my province, but since my slaughter of them serves nothing but my ignorant prejudice, I will stop it." And I slept more peacefully afterwards.

It was now the last of June, and we had ants and flies and potato-bugs and moths in plenty. Elizabeth looked upon them with a restless eye, but she refrained from open onslaughts in deference to my peculiar views. I could see that she enjoyed the prospect of a day alone with her enemies as much as Nancy and I enjoyed the thought of a cruise.

"All right," I said, as I left the girls to their bath, "it is not for me to say how long a bug shall live."

As I walked up the path, I saw a file of ants crossing it. Near the cabin, I stepped on a worm, by accident.

"It is evident," I thought, "that the

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results of my conduct are beyond me. Wherever I go, I leave a trail of fate I know nothing of. I am responsible only for the spirit of my deeds."

While the girls were getting breakfast, I made the daily tour for driftwood, bringing it in armfuls to the pile near the house. As I dropped a load, Nancy came out to get some for the fire. She rummaged about for the sticks she wanted.

"Look here," she exclaimed. "I have made a discovery."

She held up a damp board, swarming with little, grayish-blue bugs, fat and soft. "These things are beginning to infest the house," she said. "We find them in the bed-clothes, the wardrobes, under the food boxes and wherever it is dark and a little dampness gathers. They must come from this wood."

We worked through the pile and found them by the thousands.

"After breakfast," I said, "I will spread this wood in the sun. We must keep it dry, I guess."

I had caught a whiff of food and could work no more until I had eaten. I sat on the porch, all my thoughts hovering about the fireplace. We had bread toasted over the coals, fine amber coffee, brewed from Mocha and Java, mixed with an egg, not allowed to boil, and served with Borden's evaporated cream. We ate but two meals a day, had no meat, no pastry, cake or rich

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puddings, and could, therefore, afford this luxury of fine coffee and cream, with an omelet, besides. It is food I want, good, wholesome food and twice a day, but bread and butter and potatoes, or a plate of beans, or a bowl of bread and milk, with cheese, is a feast for me. I can draw up to the same old meal with a new and eager zest every day. It is food I want, not indulgence. When I have eaten my beans, I look about me for my dessert, finding it in what I see and hear, for my senses have been fed and are at work again.

Not far from me on the porch was a piece of bread we had put there to decoy the birds, if possible. As my eye chanced to fall upon it, I saw a number of large bugs at work. I went toward it, and they scurried away. I picked it up, and two bugs dropped from its under surface. I managed to capture one of these. It was certainly a cockroach, but of enormous size,—nearly an inch long.

"We've got 'em," I shouted. "You're all right now, Elizabeth."

She came to the door and looked curiously at my captive.

"A cockroach," she murmured. "Well, did you ever!"

And Nancy came and wondered.

"Where do you suppose they came from? Did you ever hear of wild cockroaches?"

"I never did; but how do the flies get here?"

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"I can understand that better. They can use their wings."

"But we are a mile from the mainland."

"They could come to us from boats that pass close by. But these cockroaches can neither fly nor swim, and, besides, they are larger and cleaner looking than the town variety."

Elizabeth took the bread and threw it far into the bushes.

"I will leave nothing to eat around the cabin," she said quietly.

"I don't know as we ought to throw things anywhere on the island," said Nancy. "We will be drawing rats here next. I can stand anything but snakes and rats."

"What's that in the water there?" cried Elizabeth, pointing.

"Where? What is it?"

"That's a little block of wood," said I.

"Rats can swim, can't they?"

"Yes."

Nancy got the bread from the bushes and from the rocks where it had been left for the birds, and threw it in the sea.

"Before we go sailing," she said, "I will give this cabin a thorough scrubbing."

"I thought you scrubbed it every day."

"I just run a mop over it. I will take everything out, and go over it thoroughly with a brush and sand. I will shake all our things, and sun them good, and pick up all the paper and scraps about. It pays, I

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guess, to keep mighty clean, even on an island by yourself."

"It's too bad for you to miss this good breeze," said Elizabeth. "If you two will pick up around, I'll do the rest while you are gone."

"Do you know," said Nancy smiling, but with a note of sadness in her voice, "I don't care so much about sailing? We only have a few more days here, now, and I hate to leave the island for a moment when it comes to going."

We were at the table inside, and through the open south windows we could see far down the Sound.

"Look at that sparkling stretch of water," I said. "And how about the fish hawks' nest and the island where the tern breed?"

"Yes," said Nancy, with a wistful gaze, "we will go. What a fine thing life is when you are free."

"You are never free," I said gently, for the happiness of Nancy is dear to me, and it hurts me to see her let it go when she might so easily keep it always.

"I am free here," she said, with a question in her eyes.

"Not more so here than there. You are bound to us and to all the things about you. You plan this and do that, because the elements or the insects or some new necessity interferes. But you love us and this place, and you find your fetters pleasing."

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"There you are. That's what I say. I love it here and find life good. I hate the city, and life is a wearing, dreadful grind to me there."

There is little fault to be found with Nancy, even in the town. She has a copying-office on the top floor of one of the highest buildings in New York, and her windows, always open, summer and winter, overlook the city to the heights and the North River and New Jersey, to the Palisades. It is a clean, sweet-smelling office, full of fresh air and sunlight and good spirits. Her girls call Nancy "Ma," and they love her dearly. She is really like an older sister to them, wiser and more experienced than they, and giving to them freely of the best she has. I have known her for years in her home and in her business life. I have found her at all hours of the night, working briskly in her office alone, bright-eyed and cheery, too busy with her task to think of her aching back and fingers. And whether these late hours are kept for a customer who pays well for them, or in the free service of friendship, it is all one to her. All sorts of girls have passed through her office, and if they could be benefited by a shrewd and generous spirit, fresh air, a frank, unaffected view of the world, and its ways, the ideals of poets and philosophers, long, sisterly talks, on their own concerns, a clear setting-forth of their follies, their incapacity, their good traits and their bad

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—if these could benefit them, with the example of Nancy's own cheerful activity thrown in, they left her better than they came. I will recount none of her generous deeds, for her life has been full of them. They filled my mind as I looked down the Sound, past Long Point and North Dumping light, and the open waterway beyond.

"Nancy," I said, "your nature in a nutshell is this: Your first impulse is superbly generous. You open your breast to the world, and if it bites you, you seek to hide the wound, you turn at bay and bite back when you would rather hide and weep. You become as resentful as you were generous before. You are very sensitive, and since you have not realized the true uses of that fine quality, it only renders you too easily hurt. You believe your friend is beautiful, and you find him full of faults. Your love of beauty is outraged; you are filled with resentment, and, behold, you are no longer beautiful yourself, but ugly and unhappy. You do not love a quarrel, as do some, but though you wage it bitterly when once begun, it makes you miserable."

"Let your sensitiveness make you sympathetic. When you are bit, or you see those around you who might nibble some, remember that the sneer of man is cousin to the snarl of the wolf, his brother. Do you see these two pointed teeth of mine,—a shade longer than the rest? They are what remain of the fangs of my ancestors.

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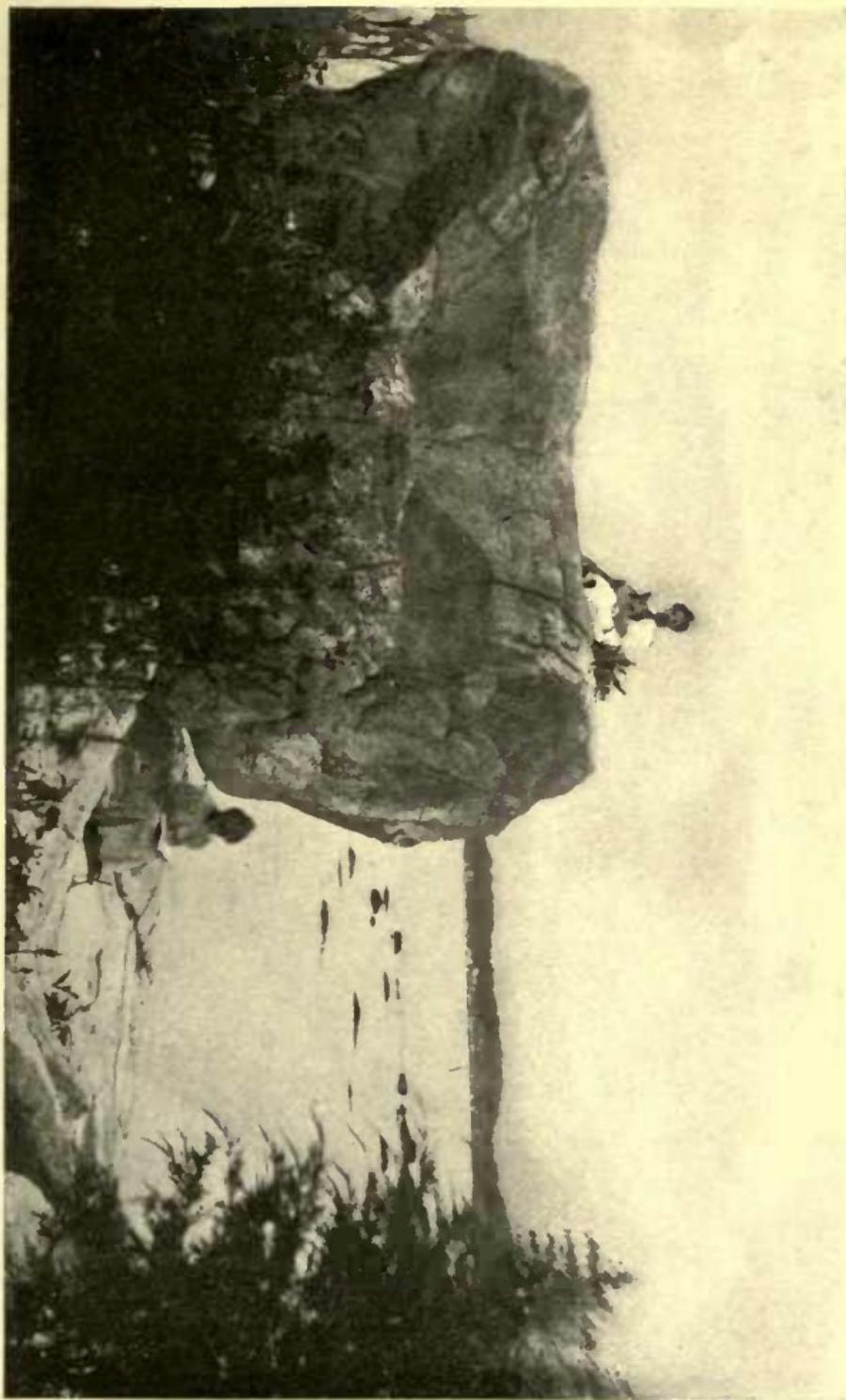
"When you think of the world, be gentle with its faults and sing its virtues loudly, for it has found them all by groping in the dark. Remember how blind and ignorant the wisest are."

"Am I so terrible as all that?" asked Nancy, with a gasp.

"You are a proper theme," I said; "and what's more, it's true."

"But I loathe the city. I cannot help it. I wish I might never see it again. You came here yourself to escape it, and you were glad—you said so."

"I did, but I know that is not the proper spirit for you or me. I do not hate it, though. I love it, in a way, but not enough. You are better than I and may help me win. It seems a long way off, as we look toward it, down the glittering Sound, and all the world seems far away to us now, but you see the flies and the cockroaches have found us out, and all the rest will follow in good time. Go back to the city, Nancy, and be glad you can, for you need it yet. So long as you can be stirred to resentment or disgust, you are so much the worse for it, even if there is less occasion for them here. And in time, these impulses remaining, will cease to lie dormant for lack of a probing, and will find vents of their own. You plan to remain in business three years longer. You are working for an independence, that you may shake the world from your feet. But the world will not be shaken. Go



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where you will, you will not be rid of it, but you may gain something more precious than an independence. Three years in the city will bring you opportunities enough to ripen your virtues and correct the impulses that destroy them.

"Love the city and it will help you. When you leave it, bring with you a wise and tender attitude toward its follies and its meaner faults, and you will be ready for the same old world in your seclusion, when its fragments drift to you, now and then."

"Well," said Nancy, "that would be a fine thing to do if I could, but I wish—I wish I need not go."

I turned to my toast and omelet, and finished them with a will, for they were good, and there was a fine, warm light in Nancy's eyes that my harangue had not dimmed or hardened. The girls waited for me with the best nature in the world. They certainly do bear with me.

We carried the dishes to the beach, and as the tide was out and I could reach my boat without wading for it, I pulled it to the shore and unfastened the stern line. I washed it out and put up the sail.

"Now," said I, "when you are ready, we'll be off."

"Come here," said Nancy, "and see these things. They look like snail-shells but see how fast they go."

As far as we could see under the water,

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the sandy bottom was covered with moving shells.

" You are right," I said. " They are snail-shells, but the things that are in them now are called hermit crabs. They have eaten the snails and crawled into their shells."

I picked one from the water and two lobster-like claws and a queer little head, all eyes and whiskers, shot out and back again, with a sharp, snapping sound. I seized a disappearing claw and pulled, but I could not get him out. I cracked the shell, as I had seen them do at Wood's Hole, and we found the long body of the crab wound about in its spiral cavity. I got him out, and threw him in the water. He seized at once upon a passing comrade and began to pick at him. If he could induce him to reach out and fight, he might pull him to pieces and possess his shell. While he poked and pinched at the opening, two others came, and finding him soft and houseless, ate him up.

" What horrible creatures," groaned Elizabeth. " Get another out and let's see how he acts."

" They are monsters of selfishness," said Nancy.

" Perhaps"; I said, " but who knows? They had no hand in their making. It's the way of their race. They have no shells of their own and must get some or be eaten. ' Tis the law, 'tis the law, and the duty of the old turn-kee.' "

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Nancy looked at me reproachfully, and I fear I did attempt an imitation of her voice, but a few moments later, as I was spreading the wood to dry, I heard her unconsciously piping her refrain, and I blessed her again for her disposition.

"May she grow in grace," I thought, "for the sake of her own peace and contentment. But what more could I ask in a friend of mine? No more."

The island resounded with the noise of our labor for six swift hours. Three o'clock came, and dinner-time before we knew it. I had chopped wood, and hauled water from the sea to Nancy and brought up sand and gravel for her path, and cleared the jungle of its dead brush until I was ravenous again. In spite of the cool, strong wind, I was warm from my work in the sun. I cleaned two three-pound blackfish and gave them to Elizabeth to fry with onions for our dinner. She put the potatoes on to boil, and we went for our swim off the rocks. Nancy made the raft and back ten times without stopping, and Elizabeth, plunging boldly in, took a few strokes in the deep water and returned.

It was four o'clock when Nancy and I pushed the boat from shore. The wind was still fresh from the south. To make the points we had planned to reach, we must beat against it, tacking between Noank and Mystic Island, until we reached the channel, then down the Sound. We could not

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put the rudder in, until the boat was a little ways from the beach, because it hit against the bottom and came off again, nor could we lower the centreboard until we were some ten feet from shore. I pushed away with an oar and told Nancy, who was on the centre seat, to put the rudder in. Her lap was filled with the odds and ends she always carries. I know there was a handkerchief, a pad and pencil, a pastille box, a package of gum, two small bottles, one of them containing perfume. What else there was, I do not know, but I saw these in the anxious glance I cast her way, as she carefully gathered them up and carried them to the stern with her. She picked up the rudder and dropped her pastille box. While stooping for this, the boat swung around my oar and was blown to the beach again. I pried it off and said sharply:

“Now, get the rudder in quick. Never mind those traps of yours until we are safely off.”

Nancy is clever with her hands, and the rudder was deftly slipped in its staples.

“Put the centreboard down.”

She gathered up her load again, fumbling it in her haste, but delayed, nevertheless, until we were on shore again. The rudder flew off. Nancy laughed, but I could not join her. I gave her a glance that brought a cold glint to her eyes. She put her things on one end of the seat and picked up the rudder in silence. Again I pushed off, and

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we got safely away. Before I could bring the boat around, we were carried close to the rocks, near the end of our island. I pushed hard on the helm and we swept past them and went scurrying through the run to the north of Mystic Island. This was the wrong side for the course we had planned.

"It don't matter," said Nancy. "Let's go this way."

She spoke cheerfully, but I could see that she was hurt.

"Nancy," I said, "most boys learn to do things because they are taught with a club. They are thrown in the water until they swim. They are hammered with marline spikes and sworn at until they jump at the sail when they are told and keep a boat to its course. They are fired from this job and that until they must sell goods or lay bricks true or starve.

"Of all things, I know sailing requires the closest attention. I can see that much now. The wind and the tide are not thinking of pastille boxes and handkerchiefs. If you are to deal successfully with them, you must keep your will as concentrated as theirs. Girls don't learn to sail because when they do things wrong, the helm is taken from them with a smile and a compliment, and they feel very proud of their seamanship since they did not sink the ship."

"I know that is so," she said, with the warm light in her eyes again, "and I'll try and not mind your blows. Let me sail."

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We were in the lee of Mystic Island, and not much of a breeze reached us.

"That looks as though it might be a wood on Fisher's Island just ahead of us. And there is a streak of white that might be a sandy beach. Shall we make for that?"

I turned and looked. It was three miles across the Sound, and I could see white-caps ahead, but they looked harmless and the wood and the beach were surely there. Near them rose a high hill, its sharp peak overlooking the whole island, the ocean upon one side and the length of the Sound upon the other. There would be a wide view from there.

For half a mile we moved easily in the lea, with Nancy, attentive, at the helm. We reached the end of Mystic Island, and the wind, sweeping past its nose, struck our sail and tipped the boat far over.

"Let the sail out," I called; "let it out."

She first jerked it in and then dropped the rope. I caught it quickly, and letting it out, changed places with her. The boat had come about to the wind, and the sail was flapping loudly over it. I turned it a little away, and as we moved ahead, brought the sail in slowly, easing it as the boat tipped, but keeping it filled with wind and the boat in motion.

"I think we could stand a hurricane with this sail," I said, "if we kept going, and the sail just taut enough. You see how

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quickly the boat rights itself when I let the sail out."

We slumped along swiftly, came abreast of the lightship and passed it with, I think, a somewhat wistful look. The waves were now huge, foam-crested creatures, rising much higher than the boat and tossing us with a sidelong lurch as they rose over us, lifted us up and passed under. I found, however, that by watching their advance, I could balance my body to meet them and help to keep the boat on its keel. I watched every wave as if it were the whole sea and no water came over us. Nancy, to assure me that she was not nervous or afraid, began to talk briskly about irrelevant things, calling my attention, at intervals, to indistinct objects on the far-off coast.

"I will attend to the view when we get out of this," I said grimly, easing the sail and pointing the boat toward an enormous billow I thought would engulf us.

"There is no danger, is there?"

"Not if I heed what I am doing."

Of a sudden, the nature of the water changed. It no longer swept past us in long billows, but rose in great peaks, leaping and dancing and splashing about us, tossing the boat lengthwise, and sidewise, and dashing over the sides and stern by the pailful. I have since learned that this patch of water is called the tide rip, and may be expected where the race is against the wind. I did not know what it was then. I

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thought we might be doomed, but I kept my eye on the sail and the boat in motion. All my life I have heard of men fighting with the elements, but this did not seem like a battle to me. The wind was a strong and friendly force, and if I worked alertly with it, it would help me through. We left the rip and came again to the comparatively easy billows. I winked at Nancy. Her eyes were snapping with delight. We sailed in silence into the lee of Fisher's Island, and approached the beach slowly, through quiet water. The boat touched bottom some fifty feet from shore. I threw the stone anchor overboard. We took off our shoes and stockings and waded in. The bottom was of smooth, white sand. There were no pebbles, but a number of hermits moved over it in their stolen shells. We found an egg in the water, as large as a bottled pear. Its shell was a pure, transparent white. I don't know who laid it, but we found it fresh and good.

We passed through a wooded hollow, kneeled by a brook to drink, and climbed the hill, stopping to eat wild strawberries and sorrel grass. At the summit, we looked silently over the lonely ocean, until our hearts ached. We turned our backs upon it, and faced the Sound. We stretched upon the grass in the shade of a boulder and marveled at the view. More than twenty miles of the coast lay before us, with the water between. We looked and said noth-

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ing. We had our fill of beauty and when the sky and shore and water were aglow with the sunset at its brightest, we crept down the hillside like sluggish gormands returning from a feast.

The wind had ceased. We waded to the boat and began the long row home. There were little waves in mid-channel, but except for this narrow strip, the water was a mirror, reflecting the colors of the sky.

A dark bank of clouds rose over Watch Hill and came our way. I turned the boat toward the north, that it might face the storm, and giving the oars to Nancy, took my place in the stern. We heard the wind and the rain when it was still some distance. We felt its cold, wet breath. The sail flapped, the boat turned and moved steadily forward, as I pulled the sail in slowly. There was more rain than wind. The clouds spread and swept the colors from the canvas. It became very dark in a moment. Then Elizabeth lit the lamp, and I turned the boat toward the cabin windows. We came to our beach cold and drenched. Nancy ran ahead to start a fire. I lifted the mast out and carried it beyond high tide, threw the anchor stone on the beach, pushed the boat off, found the loose end of my stern line easily, and fastening it to the ring, *put the float on the stern seat*, and walked with a quiet satisfaction to the cabin.

Elizabeth was making a hot milk punch. The fire cast a grateful heat through the

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room. It is a fine thing to enjoy a fire in June. I clothed myself in pink pajamas, worth ninety-eight cents in New York, but, dry and clean and gay-colored, worth millions here. Nancy came down in a blue gingham wrapper, freshly starched and ironed, a head-dress of red ribbon, blue stockings and red slippers. These colors were becoming, for her face was brown and glowing, her eyes are blue, and her head is a little top-heavy with a thick, dark mass of hair.

We did not sail during the next three days, except to Noank and to Dodge's Island for water. To both of these places Nancy sailed alone. Sometimes she made the voyage well, but again I watched her curious manœuvres restlessly.

"When she returns," I thought, "I will hold her to it rigidly. She must learn to sail."

I knew the difficulties of my task, for Nancy is something of a brigand and much of a woman. She is as bold and active as a tomboy, as feminine as the maids in your grandmother's time. Her tender heart is so near the surface always that it is wounded by a look or word.

We passed three busy, tranquil days. Sunday night, I took the girls to the train, watched it whirl them away, and returning alone to the dock, pushed off in the dark and rowed slowly across the mile of still water. The island seemed very quiet as I walked up the path.

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Chapter VII

Chapter VII



WITH the passing of the summer on my island, I have found that the despised porch overlooking Noank has become the one most frequented; that absolute solitude is not the best thing for me.

For two weeks I was here alone. A plunge in the sea, a breakfast cooked on the coals in the fireplace, the bed-clothes spread upon the roof, the cabin swept, a tour of the island for driftwood, and I was ready for the morning's fishing. If I wanted mussels for dinner, I would wade among the rocks, finding them in great clusters. In a little cove I discovered an area of mud and sand, where clams burrowed. If I wished for lobsters or blackfish, I would take a pail and hunt the beach for bait. At first, it was difficult to find the little crabs I was seeking. But when I became acquainted with them, it was possible to capture fifty or a hundred in a few moments. If the tide were out, it was only necessary to overturn the large stones, where they had crawled for shade and moisture until the water should return. If the tide were coming in, I found them everywhere along its edge, carried back and forth with the wash of the water, or scrambling over the pebbles in

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search of a shelter or under the small stones, where they had found a temporary rest. I learned that many of them take their color from their surroundings, becoming an almost transparent white in the white sand, brown and green where the seaweed hangs to the rocks, or speckled where the pebbles are of many tints. To catch them, you must move quickly, for they see you from a distance, and dart away sideways on their eight legs, with the swiftness of water-bugs. And they can dodge your descending hand with incredible skill. They seem to possess, to a great degree, that instinct which, in birds, avoids the flying missile, in hell-divers, the rifle bullet, and makes it possible for a man to hit a curved ball or parry a thrust too swift to see. Noticing this sign of kinship, I hated to hunt them for the hook. But what was I to eat—a grain that had been ground in the mill, a piece of flesh from the slaughter pen?

“So long,” I thought, “as I can see no other way of living than in the destruction of some form of life, I may as well bait my own hook as to eat of another’s fish, or to turn my nose away while another hand sticks the knife or swings the sickle for me.”

So I filled my pail with crabs and put out to the pole buoy. At first, it was all a matter of chance with me. I might have found reason for smiling at my good fortune, or for railing at the elements and my bad luck. There were days when I rowed to my post

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under a clear sky, through limpid, opalescent water, and lay quietly at anchor, dropping in my line and pulling out three and four-pound blackfish.

There were fine days, also, when I caught nothing, and still others when my hook would not fall to the bottom, nor my anchor hold. I learned in time that I must hit upon the hour of slack water, that the fish swim against the tide, going out as it is coming in and returning with the ebb. Accommodating my needs to these conditions, I could supply them easily.

For two weeks, my constant companions were fish, lobsters, crabs and the elements. When I went to Noank for groceries and mail, I found my heart warming more and more toward such people as I met, and in my idle moments on the island, I found myself most often on the Noank side. The sounds of toil from the shipyards, the far-away voices from the village, the smoke from the chimneys, the white houses, half hidden by the trees, became constantly more alluring. The endless path of water, leading out to sea, was as changeable and as full of beauty as before—why then, was my face turned back toward land? I asked this question until the answer came.

The destiny of every atom of the universe is equally associated with our own. It is not with men alone that we need to adjust ourselves in sympathy, but with the earth and air and water and all the innumer-

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able forms of life that these contain. They, too, are our fellows. We cannot escape this necessity by flying from the city. We but change our associates. If we seek for rest and peace in a tranquil contemplation of nature, as a thing apart from ourselves, we will not find it. For, though we may look at it with a far-off, impersonal vision, we cannot alter our actual and intimate relationship. Our fate, our moods and all our movements are bound to those of the stars and the pebbles, the wind, the rain and the sunlight. All that concerns men and crabs, concerns us whether we will or no. It remains for us to determine how great shall be the discord or how complete the harmony of this relationship. It is true that our knowledge must always be incomplete, but a sympathetic willingness to know will keep sweet our fellowship with men and things.

I had watched the crabs devouring each other. I had lived a life of constant murder for a week. I had struggled with wind and tide. I had listened and watched and felt emotion; but these companions around me now were still too distant. I heard the voices of the wind and water, the bells, the fog-horn and the boat whistles, but their words were lost to me. I had left the city to escape the greedy contentions of men, only to find that I must join with the fish, the lobsters and crabs in the pursuit of life.

And now, with my eyes on Noank, the

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world of men appeared to me in a new light. I remembered the hands I had touched in affection, the eyes that sought to comfort those who suffered, the voices I had heard pleading for the beauty of love and service. I had seen no evidence of a Christ among the crabs, but in Noank there were old sea captains who had risked their lives to save their crews; in New York there were ditch-diggers who had helped their comrades to safety before seeking their own.

Grim and barbarous as the struggle is, there are, in the mass of contending men, multitudes of lonely, tender hearts patiently seeking in the darkness and storm for what will satisfy the longing of the world. Their voices are of the quality of my light-ship's bell.

Every day at noon, I went across the water to the town. Just off the shore, there is a line of posts where the fishermen moor their boats. Sometimes the boats were gone, and again they were riding lazily at anchor, with here and there an owner aboard, mending his reef points, touching a scar with paint, or arranging his lobster-pots. Here was the first picket line of a friendly camp, where, so far, no password has been required of me but a smile, a nod, a word of greeting.

If I made a certain landing, I might see Mrs. Potter standing in her doorway or sitting by the open window, sewing. She would smile at me over her glasses and,

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seeing the pails I carried, offer me the water of her well. If I made a landing higher up, I would sometimes find a fishing smack at the dock, and the men on board, busy with their cargo, would ask me how I liked the island, if I had good luck with my lobster-pots. They would tell me when I might expect the blue-shelled crabs, and how to fish for flounders.

Once, a two-masted smack was unloading and, as I watched the men sorting the catch and packing it in barrels, I noticed that each one had selected a few small fish, putting them one side. When the work was done, they cleaned these, cut them into strips and carried them away, strung upon a loop of fish line.

"What are those for?" I asked the captain as he picked up his string.

"The cat," he answered. "My old Tom," he added affectionately, "would be mad at me if I didn't bring him some fish."

If I met Mr. Ashbey on the street, he would say, with always the same kindly light in his eyes:

"I hope everything is all right now on the island"; and I would have to answer that it was, except for the chimney.

"The fireplace still smokes," I would say, as gently as I could, and the light would pass from his eyes. Then one day, he came over with cement and trowel, and, as he was patching up the holes, I suggested that a mason should have done the job."

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"Do you know why I built this myself?" he asked, looking squarely at me like an animal brought to bay. "It was not from meanness. There ain't no mason in Noank, and the only one in Mystic wouldn't stop to do it, so I just had to build it myself as best I could."

I suddenly realized that it was no small task to build a house in the winter on this exposed and remote island; that he had made little or nothing by it, and that he had borne my implied blame with a wonderfully sweet patience.

I spoke my thoughts to him, and asked him how he had lost the fingers of his left hand.

"That happened more than thirty years ago," he said, holding out the almost useless stump. I knew that he owned a good hotel, built by himself, and that he worked as a carpenter and boatbuilder. He had kept his family in comfort and his reputation clean.

"Did you have any money at that time?"

"No," he replied quietly. "I was a young fellow, and unmarried then, just working by the day. I've made all I've got since I was pruned."

One day, as I was sitting on the steps of the barber shop, Mr. McDonald, the superintendent of the shipyard took a place beside me.

"Now, you are a writer," he said, laying a great, strong hand on my knee; "and I

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want to ask something of you. I want you to get the sentiment in. I tell you, we fellows who like to read want more sentiment than we get. Life is just full of it, but it is hard for a man to always see it. Now, take the shipyards, for instance. I know there is sentiment enough around me every day. And I wish I could feel it more and not do anything contrary. But I've over three hundred men at work, and I must see that there is no waste in time or labor. If I don't keep everything moving just so, they wouldn't get their wages when the month came around, and there would be nothing for the company, and the whole concern would go. I have to keep things going, and sometimes I am just forced contrary to sentiment. Now, you come down there some day, and get it all out for me, and write it down where I can have it to read when things don't go right, will you?"

That afternoon, as I returned to my boat, I heard a woman and her daughter quarreling over the position of a flower-bed, and I saw two boys fighting in the street; but all the way to my island, the sounds from the shipyard followed me across the water, and I felt Mr. McDonald's hand, heavy and warm, upon my knee.

Considering what I have heard of angels, what I have observed of crabs and what I know of men, I should say that we have reached in our progress a state midway between the devouring instincts that move the

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creatures of the sea and the ideals that shape our dreams of Heaven.

For a week I did not hear a human sound on the island. Its unbroken silence became oppressive. If I attempted to sing or talk aloud to myself, my voice died on my lips, and my heart swelled with homesickness. When I went to Noank, I began to inquire if any one had a pup or a kitten to spare. A good dog is the best of company for me. The dearest friend of my childhood was a dog, and I have never forgotten him. Since then, I have not been able to have one, for I have lived too much in cities and in houses where they were not welcomed at all hours and in all kinds of weather. This island would be a fine home for such a friend. But I could not find a pup in Noank that would suit me. I heard of a litter of Irish setters, but the mother was said to be of an uncertain character, stubborn and suspicious, and I did not want one of her brood.

The town was full of cats, but it was some time before I found a kitten. I had spread my inquiries abroad, and one morning, Mr. Potter informed me of a family of Maltese kittens lately weaned. I hurried to the house he mentioned. It was under the hill, near the water-side, and possessed a comfortable, domestic appearance that pleased me.

I was met at the kitchen door by a young woman, perhaps nineteen, who invited me

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in before she knew my errand, and stood near me, listening with an amiable expression in her eyes while I told it. I have not seen her again, but I shall not forget her. If I were an artist, she would appear on some canvas of mine, for her face and pose as she stood before me gave a perfect expression to Simplicity, Innocence and Sympathy, and were beautiful because of these. She might easily stand for the world's domestic ideal.

"I am glad you have come," she said. "We have some kittens, and Papa was about to drown them. He won't let me keep all of them."

She went to the door and called, and a dozen or more cats and kittens came scampering around the corner to her feet. They jostled each other as they jumped and crowded about her, looking up, rubbing against her ankles, mewing. A tiny gold heart hung from blue baby ribbon about the neck of one of the Maltese kittens. She picked this one up, and held it to her breast while she stooped for another. The first one climbed to her shoulders, and turning about, cuddled close to her throat, its head under her chin, its paws dabbing at the second button of her dress. The top one had been left unfastened, for it was a warm morning. The second kitten was a fat little thing, with a thick fur of good color, but its eyes and nose were stopped up as with a bad cold. I saw that all the family of young

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ones, except the one at her throat, were badly affected with distemper.

"What do you feed them?" I asked.

"Mostly milk."

"They look as if they had been eating too much fish."

"I guess they do get a good deal. Their mother and all the other old cats bring them fish. Jerry—the old tomcat there,—is their father, and their grandfather, and their greatgrandfather, too, I guess, and he is busy bringing them things all the time. He came up with a live eel yesterday, and it crawled under the house."

"I will take this one, if I may. It will get well on a diet of milk."

She gave me the second kitten, and said a little appealingly:

"If you would take another, it would be less lonesome for this one."

"The one at your throat?" I asked.

She hesitated a moment and agreed.

"You may have this one," she said freely. "I can keep another one, and we will then save three of them."

The one at her throat had pushed its head into her dress, and as she drew it forth, the second button came undone and I caught a glimpse of her white bosom, swelling to a graceful fullness. She did not notice the revelation, and I tried not to. I glanced away, and still wished to look. Who can read me truly the riddle of these impulses?

She got me a covered basket for the kit-

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tens. As she was putting them in, I said:

"You will want the locket. Let us take it off."

"No," she answered simply. "You may have that, too."

"Are they both girls?"

"Yes, but you won't mind. You are very good."

She stood behind me, smiling and silent, looking pleasantly into my eyes. And that was our adieu.

I carried the basket to my boat and pushed off. A stiff wind was blowing, and the water was rough. The boat slapped up and down sharply as it crossed the uneven waves, and I was afraid the kittens would be frightened. It was necessary to tack over a long course, and almost an hour passed before we reached the island. I beached the boat and took the basket to the cabin. I shut the doors and windows, and placed the basket on the floor and removed the cover, wondering if they were dead from fright or if they would leap out and dash about the cabin, as cats will sometimes do in strange surroundings. I found them curled about each other on the bottom, fast asleep. I sat back in my chair and watched them carefully. Their presence, the sight of their quiet repose, brought me a sense of home and affection, and tempered the silent loneliness of the island.

I watched them till they awoke. The one

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with the ribbon stood up first and stretched herself. She licked her right paw and rubbed her eyes with it. She lifted her head, sniffed the edge of the basket, stood up, and crawled over it to the floor. She looked at me, walked over to my leg, rubbed against it, and moving slowly across the room, began an interested examination of its corners, the dark hole under the stairs, the spaces behind the boxes and chairs. I would have called her Nancy, but for fear of confusion when the girls returned. So I named her Yannie.

In a few moments, the other one stood up and stretched, and rubbed her eyes, and looked quietly over the edge of the basket. She made no attempt to get out, but followed the movements of her sister with a tranquil gaze. I named her Betty.

I went outside and left the door open, that they might be free to acquaint themselves with their home, in their own way.

I put a saucer of milk on the porch and went to the beach. As I was at the far end of the island, turning over the stones for crabs, I felt something against my leg. It was Yannie. She was a little thing then, only a few weeks old, and it must have been a long journey for her down the path through the jungle, along the beach, and over the rocks and pebbles at this end. It was wet where I stood, for the tide had recently fallen, and because of this, I was the more surprised, for cats are opposed to wet

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places and are careful where they step. She followed me closely. When I turned over the rocks, she jumped at my fingers as I scratched among the sand and pebbles. If a crab ran out, she ran after him, stopping and stirring him up again with her paws. When I waded into the water, she came to its edge, sniffed at the ripples, stretched her head toward me and mewed in her anxiety to follow.

It was the most cheerful half-hour I had spent since the girls left me. Returning, we found Betty watching for us at the foot of the path. The milk was not touched. They were evidently waiting for fish.

They sat by the fireplace while I cooked my dinner, watching me with moist, half-closed, affectionate eyes, and purring loudly. When I was seated at the table, they climbed up my legs to my lap and reached up to my plate. I snapped their noses smartly and carried them to their saucer on the porch.

"Now, girls," I said, and it was pleasant to talk without a sense of greater loneliness for the sound, "you cannot eat at the table. Here is your dinner."

They turned away and, following me closely, climbed into my lap.

"You may lie there, if you want to, but keep your noses down."

If they lifted their heads toward the plate, I rebuked them. Before the meal was over, to raise my finger was enough.

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In the evening, I lit the candles and sat by the table to read. Betty climbed to one arm of my chair, and Yannie to the other. The cabin was filled with their purring. But Yannie was not long quiet. The candle attracted her. She jumped to the table and thrust her nose into the flame. With a cry of pain and a great spit of anger, she sprang away, returning instantly, to hit it with her paw. Then she moved to the other end of the table, to nurse her burns, casting curious glances at the candle now and then. Of a sudden, she fell upon her side, kicking and struggling. I picked her up and found that the ribbon collar was caught in her teeth. I removed it and hung it with its golden heart on a nail in the wall. Such things have little meaning for me, but this trinket does, at least, no harm, and while I do not need it to recall the one who gave it to me, I should miss it now.

In the morning, I gave the kittens fresh condensed milk, and they ate it willingly. A few days of this diet cured Betty, and she began to develop a brighter spirit. She never became as adventurous as Yannie, for she is not of so restless a spirit, but there is nothing cowardly or mean in her. I was never alone now. The kittens followed me everywhere, or, if they disappeared for a time in the jungle, they would come out upon me unexpectedly, seeming to know where I was, as if they had watched me constantly. When I left them on the

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island, they watched me from the beach as long as I could see them, and when I returned, they were there to welcome me.

One morning, as I pushed away, Yannie seemed unusually distressed. She came to the edge of the water and mewed piteously. I turned to speak to her, and saw her jump to a rock some four feet from the shore. There was a good breeze and the boat was moving swiftly. I was a hundred feet from the island when she leaped from the rock into the water and swam after me. I brought the boat about quickly, and made for her tiny head, just visible. Her eyes were very wide and somewhat terrified, but she swam steadily toward me until I picked her up. Betty was close to the water, craning her neck and watching in great anxiety. After this, when I went fishing, or to Dodge's Island after water, I took them with me.

They were a great comfort to me, each in her own way, showing an affection entirely free from the selfish indolence I had previously attributed to all cats. But they could not supply all my need. Most of the day I was busy and contented, but at night I tossed on my tick, for the very beauty of my surroundings and the conceptions they fostered, increased my longing for a kindred being to see and think and speak with me.

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Chapter VIII

Chapter VIII



I HAVE also found that any one who will, may go to an island as beautiful as this and take his miseries with him, setting them up as he would his bric-à-brac, busying himself with them and converting all that he sees into a setting for them.

One morning early, after a night of lonely wakefulness, I heard voices near the island, and hurrying to the window, saw a Noank sail-boat making for the beach, with a long-expected friend on board. It had been previously arranged that Tom and his wife should spend a month with me, and that Nancy should come up with them. We four had passed many days together in occasional tramps about New York, and the complete harmony of our relations and the delight we found in our comradeship was a thing to gloat over. Between Tom and myself, there was such perfect accord that we met after weeks of separation and silence as if but an hour had passed.

"Where are the girls?" I asked as he came on shore, with his grip, and paid the boatman for his passage.

"They will be here in a few days," he said. "I came up in advance to help you get things arranged. I want Ruth to like it here so we can stay for the summer."

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He stood by his grip on the sand, and as I turned from the sky and water and distant shore line, radiant and sparkling with the hues of a fair morning, I saw a cloud of uncertainty and trouble in his face.

"Well," said I, eager to have him enter with me into the joy of the place, "what do you think of it?"

"Beautiful," he said, coming for a moment out of his abstraction and looking about him with glowing eyes; "I can see great things for us here. The life of the sea is profound and grim. It gets me with a terrific grip."

We climbed the path leading from the beach to the house, and the warm breath of the earth, the sweet odors of shrubs and vines and wild roses, caused him to stop and exclaim:

"That's a fine thing to get out here in the sea. It smells like a patch of woods."

I ushered him into my cabin, confident of his delight. Before he had put down his grip, he said: "Let's scrub the floor." I had swept it thoroughly every day and it was clean, but his eyes were shocked by the contrast between unpainted boards, spotted by use, and the rugs of his cozy flat. And the walls, I could see, seemed rough and bare to him. I was surprised and grieved, for I had looked upon him as another self, and it had not once occurred to me that he would think of what might

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be lacking where there was so much to delight in.

I moved the scant furniture out, and the floor was scrubbed. I built the fire, and got the breakfast and was glad to see Tom in the hammock on the porch, because I was anxious that the beauty of our surroundings should delight him. As I was setting the table, he came in, and picking up a plate, rubbed his finger over it and said:

“Why, these dishes are greasy.”

“That is the moisture that gathers on everything around salt water,” I said.

“It’s grease,” he insisted, with a wry face. “I can’t eat off such dishes.”

He picked up a knife and exclaimed over the rust.

“Can’t you get these clean?” he asked in helpless distress.

“Suppose you try it while I am getting the breakfast ready,” I replied.

He gathered up the dishes and held them disconsolately until I found the dishpan for him.

“Now,” said I, “if you will take this pail and get some sea water, you can wash them on this box on the porch. Here is the sapolio.”

Now, there are at least two ways of going to the edge of the rocks for a pail of water. You may keep your mind fixed on the necessity that drives you there, grumbling and fretting with yourself and getting nothing from your errand but the drudgery

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of it, or you may lift your eyes to the far-reaching sky and sea, taking your pail empty and returning with it full, as a simple incident of a stroll to the water-side and back. Tom went and returned, taking the images of the rusty knives and the moist dishes with him. He had great difficulty in finding a rag for the sapolio. He finally tore a piece from a towel and began to dab and scrub, sighing and groaning at his work.

"This sea water won't get the grease off," he complained. "Just look!"

"Tom," said I, "those dishes are clean. I scrubbed them with sand and washed them afterwards with hot water and sapolio. We can't have fresh water on this island for washing purposes without devoting all our time to getting it. Come and eat, for the breakfast is getting cold."

I cleared the table and washed the dishes while Tom examined the premises.

He asked me how much the house had cost and thought it was too much. He found that the stones could be knocked from under one corner of the porch and suggested that we clear the island of its wild tangle of sweet-smelling shrubs and replace it with a smooth lawn. I listened and looked at him from the corner of my eye. I could not believe that this was the Tom I had known.

When the dishes were done, we went to the beach and captured the crabs for bait. As we picked them from their hiding-

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places, Tom's wonder and interest grew. He cursed them for elusive devils, sighed over their fate, wondered at their intelligence, their trick of assuming the colors of the weeds and pebbles. He held them up to examine them; he watched them eat and fight, and discovered as much in a few moments as I had learned in weeks. But he continued to shake his head dubiously as we dropped them in the bait pail, and when, anchored by the pole buoy, we put them on the hooks and cast them overboard, he seemed to see only the wretched nature of their end. If the fish did not bite, he grew restless; if they did, he hauled them in with a grim zest, and struggled to unhook them, now pitying their state, now damning them for the trouble they made.

For two hours, while the water was slack, we fished in mid-channel, and when the tide became too strong, we moved out of the race and anchored where our hooks could fall to the bottom. I needed fresh bait for my lobster-pots and my car was empty, so we fished all day. It was a clear, calm morning, and our boat rode tranquilly at its anchor. There were long intervals when the fish did not bite and when Tom, forgetting them, looked with appreciation across the gleaming, quiet water and along the distant, far-stretching shore line. Then my haggard spirits would revive, in the hope that he would see and enjoy and complain no more.

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In the afternoon, a breeze came to us from the southwest, and freshened to a gale. As the waves rose about us, rocking the boat, Tom watched them with a restless eye.

"You think it's safe here?" he inquired.

"It will be a stiff pull home," I replied, "but it's safe enough."

"All right," he said courageously; "if you want to stay, I'm with you."

At five o'clock, we pulled up the anchor and the boat began to drift swiftly with the wind and tide. The pole buoy was passed in a flash, and we were racing along in mid-channel. Before I could get to my seat, a bucket of water dashed over the rocking boat, and Tom exclaimed:

"My God! Look at that."

I seized the oars and began to row, keeping the boat steady and in motion.

"Let me help," said Tom. "Give me an oar."

I was glad to do so, for it was a hard pull. I untied the cord that held the oar-lock in position and passed it back to him with an oar. He slipped the lock in its hole, but did not tie it. He worked with feverish haste, gave a mighty stroke with his oar, and fell back in the boat. The lock had been yanked out and had fallen overboard. We were driving out to sea with the rushing tide. The wind was whistling past us, lashing the water into white-caps. And we could no longer row!

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"We are in for it now," I exclaimed.

"We can paddle," cried Tom, his face set grimly, his eyes now gleaming with determination, now dull with despair.

"You row and I'll paddle," he said, standing up in the prow and sweeping the water with a strong stroke. I saw that we held our own by this method, and that if we could once get out of the tide race, we could make the island in time. Tom paddled until he was exhausted, and we exchanged places. We worked our way, inch by inch, and pushed our boat on shore. When it was all over, and we sat before the fire to dry, Tom admitted that it was a fine adventure.

"It's all in the day's work," I said.
"Let's have our dinner."

I took him to the beach and showed him how to skin the blackfish.

"See," I said, "you hit him on the head with a stone to stun him. You leave the head on until the last, to hold it by. Now, I fasten my fingers in his gills, stick the point of the knife in his throat, and rip him open down the belly to the tail. Now, I cut through the skin down his back, first on one side the fin, and then on the other. I cut his skin across the top, just beneath the gills, and loosen it from the flesh along this line. When you have an inch or two free, you can grip it with your fingers and tear it off."

As I illustrated this, the half-skinned fish

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jerked from my hand and slapped convulsively in the sand.

"My God!" exclaimed Tom. "It's still alive."

I caught my victim, cut off his head, and scooping out his entrails with my thumb, washed him in the sea.

"Now," said I, "you clean another one while I build the fire and get the dinner."

Half an hour later, I went to the beach and found him washing the fish, picking and scrubbing them, his face set with lines of disgust.

"I guess I can eat them now," he said.

At his table in New York, I have eaten fish perhaps two days dead, and that some one else had caught and killed and cleaned in the same relentless manner. We talked of this at the table, and he agreed that we cannot judge as to the value of life, sparing the animal and slaying the vegetable, and that if we eat what another kills, it is sheer cowardice to avoid the act of slaughter for ourselves. And yet he ate his meal with a poor relish, and from that time on, I was expected to clean the fish, *because I did not mind*. I am glad of this, for each time I did so, this phase of the problem of life came forcibly before me, and I have had many a long and profitable think as I skinned and gutted our dinner on the sand.

After dinner, Tom suggested that we get some fresh water, as he did not like to drink it two days old.

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" You go," I said, " while I wash the dishes."

" I don't know the people," he replied, " and I'd rather not go alone."

" But I didn't know them at first. I had to get acquainted with them. They are as friendly as they can be, and it is understood that we are to get water there. If you want to wash the dishes, though, I'll go for the water."

" Oh, no. I'll go for the water."

He took two pails and rowed to Mystic Island. I watched him walking along the grassy path, over the gentle rise, and saw with delight that he was looking at the brilliant sunset back of Noank, and I knew that none of the beauty of the graceful dark line of land and the glowing sky and water would be lost to him, for there is no one more sensitive to the world about him, more deeply sympathetic with it, than is Tom, at most times. A little later, I saw him at the crest of the hill, returning. He stopped twice to rest between there and the beach. When he reached the boat, he put the pails in at once and I called to him to push off first, so the lurch would not slop the water. There is nothing more exasperating than to be told how to do things. Tom, however, did not heed me. By careful management, he got away successfully and thumbed his nose at me in triumph. When he brought the pails in, he said, with an air of weariness:

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"That's a long way to go for water. We ought to have a well here."

"I can't afford one. It would cost a good deal to drill through these rocks."

"Gibbie says the well on Mystic Island rises and falls with the tide. It's just sea water filtered through. Why can't we get a barrel and sink it in the beach?"

"I have tried that, but there is a ledge of rocks about two feet below the surface of the sand. That is a beautiful path across Mystic Island."

His face brightened, and his eyes glowed with the soft hues of pleasure.

"Yes," he said warmly, "it was a fine walk over. That long point of land between the sky and water assumes a mysterious and appealing shape in the twilight. The colors were brilliant and exhilarating. As I climbed the hill, I felt like shouting."

There is a huge rock rising twenty feet above the water at the edge of the island, about forty feet from my cabin door. Its flat top is as large as a good-sized room. We climbed to this comfortable observatory to watch the night fall. Tom took with him a square platform of boards and his rocking-chair, and I, a blanket and pillow. If I may throw myself flat, with my head up enough to see, I am most at my ease. What this is to me, Tom finds in a rocking-chair.

A great sea-bird, enlarged to our perception by the darkness, flew swiftly over us.

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We could hear an occasional shrill note from the gulls, perched for the night upon the fish nets staked near the island. The incoming tide washed the rocks under us. The moon would not rise for an hour, but the night was bright with the light of such a multitude of stars as I have seldom seen; and they were unusually full and luminous.

"How little we know," said Tom, as he rocked and gazed. "It is pitiful. Here we sit with our eyes cocked on the universe like two wise frogs croaking by their pond. If we toppled over this rock, while craning our necks at the stars, we would sink, gurgling, into the sea. We look and speculate, but what can we say after it all, except to exclaim in meaningless phrases over its varying aspects? Why all this marvelous beauty? Surely, it is not simply for us to gape at. Just look at this night—listen and look! I could sing or weep. No one can avoid the emotion, but why do we feel it?"

"There must be some significance for us beyond the mere tickling of our senses," I replied. "The beauty, the mystery, the magic of the earth and heavens has not fulfilled its mission when it has caused us to sing or weep."

I have always been able to talk with Tom as with no one else. No other companionship has been so profitable to me. We grow in wisdom as we learn to understand our emotions. To feel and to under-

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stand; these are the requisites. Tom has been for me as a deep shaft. His emotions reach further than mine. We are two sympathetic prospectors. He, with the groans and straining of the delver, brings up the hidden quartz, and I fashion it into exchangeable coin.

Tom perceives the world as it is, more clearly than I, but the world, as it is, is a riddle without head or tail, unless we also recall what it has been and conceive what it is to be.

“The universe,” I said, “is seeking to know itself. Its good is the order, its evil the disorder of its parts. As its various forms of life learn to know each other and to form a sympathetic relationship, good ensues. There is no real separation between the various forms. Because of their close connection, the friction and discord that comes from their ignorant, crisscross activity produces all that we call evil.

“The good of our universe is revealed to us by the senses. It appears in beauty to the eye.

“Here we are, little individuals in a greater one, composed of his elements, bound up in him, fated to share his destiny. And as we share it, we shape it, also. A part of the universe without, we are creating a miniature universe within, drawing into ourselves the elements and shaping them to our ways. If the universe displeases any one, let him make a better one

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within himself. In this way, only, may we lend a hand to fate.

“ Again, this universe of ours is an individual among others, a little thing in yet another universe. Is it a man, a leaf, a crab, an atom of the air, a grain of sand? That would be an interesting question to pursue. The answer would be found by discovering what form of life is really dominant here. But we are after the significance of beauty now, and that is the same for every form alike. What, then, is the moral quality of our universe? Is it good or evil? If it be a man, is he ignorant and malicious; does he skulk in the darkness; is he sullen; is he a coward? Is he bold and unscrupulous; is he polite and cunning; is he honest and greedy, or is he wise and generous and tender?

“ Our universe is good. I know this, because in its larger aspects, it is beautiful. You and I may hear discordant sounds and see ugly sights when we detach them from the whole. A bad man is an affair between him and me. I may live at odds with my village and it is ugly, but if I forget my quarrels and climb to the crest of a distant hill, the town, reposing in the sheltered valley, becomes at once a place of fine dreams and prospects. My bad man, my sharp-tongued neighbors, are lost in the beauty of a harmonious whole.

“ Men rob and murder and deceive, and yet the sum total of their conduct, from the

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beginning until now, is progress toward a loving fellowship.

"Is there a bog in your meadow? Is there a barren waste? Extend your vision, include a wider reach of earth and heaven, and your eye will rest upon a scene of beauty. Varying degrees of discord still prevail between the parts, but the universe, as a whole, is wise and generous and tender. Its trend is toward harmony, beauty and order. Its spirit woos us toward this end. We cannot behold its beauty without emotion, for its spirit is our spirit, and the elements within us, seeing the larger harmony without, recognize in it an ideal that may be attained. Its spirit woos us, and as we see and shape ourselves into accord with it, we increase the harmony of the whole. We are at once creatures and creators. We are subject to a destiny we partly shape. We help to fashion the countenance of our God, inspired by the beauty it has already attained."

"For my part," said Tom, "I think the universe is an individual very much like McKinley or King Edward. It might be a Bismarck, a Gladstone, a Morgan or a Rockefeller, but I question if it possesses, as a whole, the singleness of purpose and the strength of will of these men. It is certainly not a malicious brute, but it might very well be a John L. Sullivan, good-natured enough when sober, mellowed by a little liquor, made maudlin by more, and

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ugly by too much. I think, however, it is just an average, rather phlegmatic sort of fellow, preserving a formal, well-balanced poise in mediocrity; or, as you suggest, it might be a crab or a leaf or an atom of the air, and man but a minor subdivision in its make-up."

"But the significance of its beauty would be the same."

"Yes, that is true. Whatever it is, its larger trend is toward harmony and beauty."

We remained on the rock until the moon rose, and its widening pathway of light led from us, past Latimer's Reef, to the ocean. In my own mind, the argument did not end where we had left it. I saw the ships of man passing over the water around me. Some time his vehicles will be as freely riding the air. Surely he, more than any other form of life, is an active agent in the effort of the universe to know itself. He is bringing the elements into a closer and closer acquaintance. Through him, the forces of the earth and air are joining hands, and the sea, the forests, the mines, the fields of cotton and hemp, have become related in purposeful activity. And man himself is becoming more sympathetic and friendly with a greater variety of conditions. Harmony is produced by tuning to a single string, and it may be that the race of man is the keynote of universal accord.

"I shall be content," I said, "if I main-

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tain, through every moment of my days, an attitude in harmony with the colors of this evening's sunset; if no mood of mine does violence to the spirit of this starry night. If I can always enter Noank and take with me the sentiment its distant aspect awakens; if I can dwell in New York, and in my life give expression to what the city seems to be as I view it from the Palisades; if I can sail the sea and walk the fields, noting as I go the conflicting details, but keeping my own being in tune with the beauty that shapes their larger forms, I shall be satisfied."

"And when you die?"

"And when I die, I hope that my broken vessel will return a well-seasoned mess to the parent brew."

"Any conception of life is good," said Tom, "if held in reverence. Reverence is man's salvation. The world has outgrown its old beliefs, and it has not yet gained enough of the knowledge it is seeking to inspire a reverent attitude."

"Shall we stop our croaking for the night?"

"Yes. It is eleven o'clock. There goes the Stonington boat."

The boat, six miles away, gliding from its harbor into the channel of the Sound, appeared to us as a narrow thread of light about a foot long. We could hear the dull throbbing of its engines.

"There are, perhaps, fifty people on

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board," I said. "I would like to write a romance, opening it with a picture of this scene, and dealing with a boatload of people, whose every impulse would be in keeping with its beauty. What a fine voyage they would have, down the moonlit Sound."

"Listen!" said Tom, turning his head quickly, and lifting his hand in a gesture of suspense. There is an island about the size of mine a few hundred feet to the north. It rises from the water in receding ledges. Its surface was now quite clear in the moonlight, but the side toward us was lost in darkness. As Tom spoke, a loud flopping came from the shadows. We could see nothing, but we knew that a flounder or sea eel or a large blackfish had been left upon a ledge by the falling tide, and was struggling desperately, as it smothered in the air.

"Horrible," said Tom, his eyes staring, his great mouth twisted in distress. "There is not much beauty in the scene for that poor devil. I've had enough for one day. Let's go to bed."

As we were spreading our blankets on the ticks, Tom grew depressed. I could see discomfort of spirit clouding his face. He sighed and closed a window. He held up a quilt, felt of it, threw it down, and said in a mournful tone:

"Everything is damp. We ought to have closed the windows before we came in."

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I like to get into a dry bed. I think I would prefer it so, as a rule, but a damp one does not distress me, and I have had many a sweet sleep in the rain. On this occasion, I had noticed no dampness, but had slipped under the clothes, my mind still dwelling on the theme of our discussion. Tom's manner and comment entered my mood like a branch of thorns. "If you must have dry clothes," I thought, "why don't you arrange to keep them so, and if you neglect to do so and find them damp, will a distressed and complaining spirit dry them? Confound it, Tom, how can you reconcile your philosophy with your conduct now?" And I did not see that I was committing the fault I condemned. Material things irritated him, and his fault-finding irritated me. The good or the evil lies in our attitude; the cause is never an excuse. Whoever feels irritation, is in fault, whatever his reason may be. Whatever disturbs us is our opportunity. Tom's complaining was mine, but I did not recognize it, and I allowed myself to be rankled and upset.

"How can you sleep on these narrow ticks?" asked Tom. "They are full of lumps. I don't believe Ruth can stand it."

"I will venture to say that Ruth doesn't make as much fuss as you do," I replied.

"Perhaps not," said Tom frankly. "Perhaps that's so."

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In the morning, we went for a plunge off the rocks. Before this, I had gone in my wrapper and returned to the house to dress. Tom showed me a better way. He taught me to take my clothes with me and spread them out in the sun, sitting for a while, myself, in a warm corner of the rocks before the bath.

A form of seaweed grows on the rocks to the line of high water. It is green and strong and pleasant to the touch. I have found it one of the conveniences of my bath-tub, for it protects me from contact with the hard, rough surface of the rocks, and offers something to cling to as I climb from the water. I was surprised to see Tom pulling it up.

"We ought to make a place clear of this for our bath," said he. "Here is a succession of ledges, leading like wide steps into deep water. If we get this seaweed off, we can walk down and see where we are going."

He worked away for some time and seemed put out because I did not help him. I could not sympathize with his purpose, but I wish I had sympathized with *him* and lent a hand. A happy fellowship is not for those who stand aloof. We may think that we know more than our neighbor, but real wisdom is that which takes us closer to him.

When Tom had cleared a ledge, we dove from it, and climbing out again, cut our

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hands and knees on the barnacles the clearing had left exposed.

"We can knock those off with a hammer," said he, but this was never done.

As we were dressing, Tom said:

"I have thought of a way to get fresh water. We could take a barrel, fill it half-full of dirt, pour in sea water, and let it filter through."

Had this been proposed to me as an experiment, I would have entered upon it with interest, but I got from Tom's suggestion only the lingering concern he felt. I protested to myself against this bringing of bugaboos and anxieties to my island, and so taking resentment for a companion, I lost another pleasure. It would surely be interesting to know if one could get fresh water from the sea by so simple a means, but as I left Tom to follow his own suggestion, the test was not made.

I built the fire and got breakfast, and cleared the table. Then, seeing that Tom had taken his rocking-chair to the porch, I asked him to wash the dishes while I cleared the cabin. This was another prompting of ill-nature in me, for had I preserved a serene and wholesome spirit, I would have found my interest and happiness in doing what needed to be done. All labor is in itself a means of knowledge, and a source from which the truest happiness flows. If another man leaves me his work to do, he is bestowing upon me his choicest

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gift. My only concern should be for him in his loss, and I should seek the wisdom with which to induce him to share it with me for the blessing it is.

Tom came to his task as if all the drudgery of life had been thrust upon him. It was a wretched morning for us both.

"I'll tell you what we could do," said Tom suddenly. "We might get a barrel, fill it seven-eighths full of water, and tow it here. A barrel seven-eighths full will float."

"All right," I said, "we'll get the barrel."

It was about noon when we started for Noank.

The water was rippling pleasantly under a light breeze that would just carry us before it. I put up the sail and we made the trip as easily as one might lie in a hammock. We were in a pleasant humor as we got on shore, and strolled leisurely through the town. We spoke of the grassy streets, the fine, old trees, the fragrant yards, the friendly faces of those we met, and the old-time relations of sympathetic reflection and converse were restored between us.

Our search for a barrel led us at last to the shipyard, and Mr. McDonald. We met him as he was leaving a half-finished barge, and told him our want.

"I can give you an empty whisky barrel," he said. "We place one in every boat we build. They are used to carry water,

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and I never heard any complaint of the whisky, except that the flavor was too mild."

He selected the barrel and helped us roll it to the water-side, and when we asked him the price, he said genially:

"I've forgotten what we pay. If I think of it some time, I'll look at the bills, and if I forget it, there'll be small loss."

With the barrel in the boat, we set sail for Dodge's Island.

"Let me sail," said Tom. "I want to learn how."

He took the rope and rudder and squatted comfortably in the stern seat. The wind was dying away, and the boat moved through the smooth water as peacefully as a cloud floats through a tranquil sky.

"This is wonderfully fine," said Tom. "I'm beginning to see the delicate charm of the place. It's not the house that we're here for, but the world of open air and water about us."

"I'm glad of that," I said, "for I was afraid you were seeing nothing but discomforts."

"It's strange," he answered thoughtfully, "how a man's habits will get hold of him. A few years ago, I would have slept on a bare floor and not noticed it, and I thought nothing of my food. Ruth has certainly spoiled me for all that. She makes me so comfortable in a thousand ways that I'm lost now when I must take care of myself

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or where my personal surroundings are not just so."

"Yes, we groan over the stress of life and the need for constant toil. We look with terror upon the reaching hands of want, and all because we are not content with what the earth offers us for a fair return of labor. We are not slaves to necessity, but to our palates, our vanity, our love of power."

"We seem to be standing still," said Tom.

"It's worse than that—we are drifting back. The wind is gone. We must row."

Tom took the oars, and I told him what McDonald had said on the barber's steps.

"That's fine," he exclaimed. "You can bet the ones who are looking for sentiment are those who carry it with them."

We passed half a mile to the west of my island, but its reflection in the glossy water almost touched our boat.

"I can understand now," said Tom, resting on his oars and turning toward the Sound and sea, "what you feel about the absence of the police."

"Look, Tom, you can see the vegetation that clings to the rocks below us. It is ten feet deep here. That must be a big boulder down there, covered with ferns."

"Don't you think that the creatures of the sea, moving among their beautiful groves, take the same delight in them that we do in ours?"

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"Yes, I do. No beauty is thrown away. All forms of life perceive it, and are being modified by it more or less rapidly, according to their perception."

"But this is not filling the barrel," said Tom, taking up the oars again.

"Do you see those ripples coming this way? We won't have to row, I guess."

In a moment, we felt the breeze on our faces, the sail filled, and the boat glided forward.

"It's like a dream," said Tom, with a sigh of content, as he shipped the oars and took his place at the rudder. "I didn't know it was so easy to sail."

By almost imperceptible degrees, the ripples grew to waves, and the breeze freshened. The boat leaned from the wind. A seething sound came from its wake. As the waves grew, they lifted the prow and slapped against it in its descent.

As we neared our port, we were scudding before a strong wind, in the midst of swiftly moving white-caps.

"A little to the right!" I said, as we neared the opening between Mason's and Dodge's Islands. "Steer to the right!"

We were moving swiftly, and it was necessary to clear a long reach of nets set directly in our path.

"To the right—to the right!" I shouted.

Tom muttered to himself, and the boat turned just in time. As we shot past the nets, toward the beach, I pulled up the

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centreboard, and a moment later, we were landed, with the nose of the boat three feet on shore.

"You should have let go the sail. We might have struck a stone."

"Now, that it's over," said Tom, "I don't mind telling you that I had troubles enough. The rudder came off out there, and I was holding it in the water with one hand."

We found that one of the brads in which the rudder swings was gone.

"That's bad for us," I said.

"Do you think we can get back? It looks pretty wild out there in the channel now."

The wind would be against us on the return, and our rudder was useless.

"I can steer with an oar," I said, "but with a barrel of water to tow, we would have some difficulty."

"I don't think we'd better try it," said Tom dolefully.

"We might go back around behind these islands. It would be a longer way, but we would be in comparatively smooth water."

"All right, if you think we can."

We got the barrel from the boat, set it on the sand, tied our tow line to it, and filled it two thirds full. Tom hauled the water from a deep well, by means of a pole, and I carried it down to the barrel. It was a half hour of hard work, and I could see by his sweaty, disturbed face, that my friend

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was no longer contemplating the joy and sentiment in man and nature, for he could not see it in his own toil and danger.

But the barrel was filled and rolled into the water, and fastened to the stern of the boat. Tom was to hold the sail, while I steered with an oar. It was difficult to leave the shore, for the wind and waves worried us back to it as often as we pushed away. Several attempts failed, because Tom and I were working at cross purposes. At last I said :

"Look here, Tom, two minds can't run a boat. Now, you do as I tell you, and we'll get out of here."

I was not conscious of my tone or manner, but they must have been exceedingly irritating. Tom submitted in silence, and we eventually got clear of land and began to move steadily with the wind and tide, up the inlet. I was not sure of our way, for I had never sailed this course; but I believed we could pass around Mason's Island and reach the channel between Mystic and Noank. We had no trouble moving in this direction, but I could feel the drag of the barrel, and grave doubts assailed me. How would it be when we attempted to tack?

As we neared the shore-line at the head of the inlet, I saw two ways divided by a point of land; the one to the left led to a narrow outlet under a low railroad bridge. To pass this, we must take down the sail, and I was not sure of what lay beyond. We

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decided to go to the right of the point. A half hour later, we found ourselves near the beach of an enclosed cove. In silence, we turned about, and took up the oars, for we could not sail out against the wind, and there was no room to tack. A thick mass of sea grass rose close to the surface, and rendered our progress doubly hard. We tugged at the oars doggedly. They were constantly tangled in the grass. The barrel, at first a mere dead weight, seemed finally to possess a personality and purpose of its own, dragging us back with a sullen, tireless strength. We moved, however, inch by inch, and after two hours of grim straining, we reached the point of land, and rounding it, dropped our oars, and drifted before the wind toward the railroad bridge.

Passing under this, we made a clear, straight course for half a mile, reaching the end of Mason's Island. We were now compelled to turn southeastward. Another cove lay directly before us, opening on our left into the wide channel. If we could make this opening, and could tack with our barrel, we could reach Noank, and the island would be an easy port from there.

I brought the boat to the wind as much as I could, and just missed the opening. Another struggle with the oars cleared the point that enclosed us, and we started on our first tack. My arms were weary, and the barrel behind, drifting sideways, thwarted my efforts to steer. Tom, hold-

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ing the sail, had lapsed into a disconsolate, exhausted indifference. To make any progress at all, it was now necessary to hold the sail close in, and to keep it full.

"Keep your eye on the sail," I panted.
"She is flapping at the mast."

He looked wearily up, and in a moment was gazing again at the shore-line, as if taking his last look of land.

"Keep your eye on the sail!" I shouted.
"Can't you see we are just drifting?"

He turned on me fiercely, and said:

"Do you think I am going to break my neck craning up at the sail?"

"Well, some one's got to. I can't handle this boat alone without a rudder."

"You are intolerable," he cried, throwing the rope from him. "I'll let the damned thing go."

"You are a crazy, incompetent fool," I retorted, out of my head with the long, exasperating strain.

There was a moment's ominous silence after this, in which we glared at each other, while the boat went its own way swiftly, blown sideways toward the land.

And then Tom said, with a husky, appealing voice, and a moistened eye:

"Come, now, let's not quarrel. My God, man, shall we let a worthless barrel break up our friendship?"

Something seemed to snap in my head, and a load of distress and anger fell from me.

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"Let's dump the old thing on shore," said I.

A light of relief shone from his face. He reached out his hand, and we gripped each other, as men do when they have escaped death together. We had drifted to a point on the Connecticut shore, as far as we could readily get from our destination, and here we beached the barrel and anchored it to some stones. Then we pushed away, and as the boat settled easily into a course for home, we laughed and hallooed till our rasped and haggard spirits were restored.

"Well," said Tom, "you can easily see how just such a miserable little mess like that might end in murder."

"Yes," I replied, and saw more clearly than before, that whether here or there, we are straws in the wind. We may move with the forces, keeping our eyes open and our souls in sympathy, or we may be tossed about by them in ignorant, blind and passionate discord. This is the difference between love and hatred, happiness and misery, good and evil. On sea or land, in town or country, in wealth or poverty, in big and little things, the same law holds.

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Chapter IX

Chapter IX



THE week passed with us in much the same manner as the first two days. Tom worried over the work, and I continued to be irritated by his fretting. He was afraid of the water, and gave up attempting to sail, but he resolutely went with me in fair or stormy weather. He could not learn to understand a boat and the elements, nor adjust himself to the conditions about him, but, relieved of responsibility or the need for action, he could face danger, whether real or fancied, with at least an outward quiet.

Time and again Tom suggested that we buy sail cloth to enclose the porches.

"They will make two big, nice extra rooms," he said.

I had built the wide porches for shade, and I wanted them open. In fair weather they were certainly pleasanter so, and the house was large enough to shelter us all in a storm.

I admitted that cloth curtains hung on rollers, to be lowered or raised at will, would be well to have, but, as neither of us had any money to spare, it seemed foolish to harp on such an incidental need.

An oil stove came by express from New York. It was sent by Nancy. "Ruth

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would not enjoy cooking at a fireplace," she wrote, "and it will be a nice thing to have."

It was certainly a great convenience. I could not have bought one myself, and since I must do without, I had taken a delight in mastering the primitive method. But I turned from the embers to the blue flame burners with a grateful satisfaction. My kettles were no longer covered with soot; my hands and face were no longer burned; the smoke did not fill my eyes. I believe in conveniences, but I believe in cheerfully doing well without them, if you must.

At least ten times a day Tom would sigh for Ruth. "If she were here," he would say, "I could stay forever. I cannot do housework. I cannot look after my things. She has spoiled me, and I am lost without her."

Ruth is the best wife I know, and one of the sweetest and truest of women. For Tom's sake, and for my own, I wished for her. In my heart I longed for Nancy. Among women, she is my best companion. I had missed her presence before, but I long ago learned to busy myself with what I have, and to find my satisfaction in what each day brings. Since Tom's arrival, I had drifted from my course. I had been irritated. I was anything's man. Having admitted one malformed vagabond to my soul, the whole herd of tramps came after,



A View Seaward

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and I began to count the hours, to run ahead of time, to fret and find fault, and long for Nancy.

Ruth came up by the Stonington boat, and we sailed to Noank early in the morning to meet her. As we neared the town dock, we saw her, sitting on her trunk, her back toward us. The girlish figure and glorious mass of red hair, the familiar hat and dress, were a welcome sight to us, and we hallooed noisily. She paid no heed. She was acting mad, because we had not met her at the train, and because she had been almost an hour on the dock, waiting. But when Tom pulled her from her trunk and beat her publicly, that all men might know he was the master of his house, she threw up both hands and capitulated. She kissed us both, for it has always been understood that, up to a certain point, Tom and I had share and share alike in her.

Ruth was afraid to venture over in our little boat, and said so frankly, with an affectionate appeal to our generosity in her bright blue eyes. She would not have chosen to live on an island, but had come to us because Tom wished it. She was not a philosopher, but just a complex combination of child and woman, a being of affectionate impulses and stubborn fidelity, devoted to the comfort of her husband, and managing, in some mysterious fashion, to reconcile her traditional beliefs with his unorthodox thoughts and ways.

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I have sought to maintain toward her an attitude of passive affection. She is not for me to analyze nor fashion, for she is mine only as the wife of my friend. We three have been happy together, because I have carefully preserved this attitude and because she has accepted me, through him, and when necessary, he has pleaded with her for me.

"Tom," I said, "we can hire Mr. Main to take Ruth and the trunk over."

"Good!" he replied. "We'll do that."

Ruth sat serenely in the larger boat, and seemed to enjoy her voyage, smiling back at us as we followed, gazing placidly about her, over the rippling water, and feeling her way to Mr. Main's heart by the sympathetic converse she is able to adapt to any one.

As we approached the island, Ruth viewed it with delight, and when we stood upon its beach and walked up the path and looked about us, her wonder and admiration grew.

"It is so much higher than I thought," she said, "and more beautiful. It seems perfectly safe here to me. The water never could reach to the top, could it?"

"Nowhere near," I said confidently.

"It's beautiful. I am sure no one could want a lovelier spot."

"Well," said Tom resignedly, "I am glad you like it. But you had better come in and look at the beds. We can get a couple of cots, if you say so."

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Ruth followed us inside, and thought the lower room was exceedingly bright and cozy.

"We were going to scrub the floor," I said, "but we did not have time this morning."

"It doesn't need scrubbing," said Ruth quietly. "It is perfectly clean."

We went to the garret, and here again she expressed delight. The airy, sunny quarters seemed sweet and pleasant to her. We showed her the ticks and spread them on the floor.

"They are good enough," she said. "It would be foolish to buy cots. They would only be in the way. I think this is all just lovely here."

Tom turned away in bewilderment, and went downstairs.

"He is not used to camping out," said Ruth pleasantly, "and I am. He'll be all right now. He needed me, I guess."

I found Tom outside, and I was glad to see a change in him. His eyes were brighter, his face more serene. His body was like that of a man relieved of a heavy load.

"I'm going to enjoy this place," said he, "now that Ruth is here. Let's go over and get a beefsteak for dinner."

"We will have Ruth for dinner," I replied, "and that is enough luxury for one day."

"But wouldn't you enjoy a steak?"

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"Yes. But that is not the way to live on two dollars a week."

It is astonishing how much of her personality a woman can put into the food she cooks. Ruth served us a meal of fish, potatoes and onions, taken from the stock I had drawn from, prepared in the same frying-pan, and, so far as I could see, by the same method as my own, and yet how superior it was to any I had served. It seemed to possess something of the delicacy and sweetness of her own nature. We did, in truth, have her for dinner, and it was luxury enough.

"We would be all right here now," said Tom, "if we could enclose one of the porches for a kitchen and have the cooking done outside."

"That would be nice," said Ruth. "We could use canvas for that, and it would not cost very much."

"What do you say?" asked Tom.

Now, I could afford absolutely nothing more. The house and its simple furnishings had exhausted my resources, and what Nancy was able to spare. If I lived on two dollars a week, I could stay here quietly until October. If I spent any more than that, I must get out and hustle for it. I would rather have the stove inside and the porch open and stay here than to form a kitchen and leave it two weeks sooner.

"Fix it as you want it," I said, "and I will pay half."

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Nancy would not arrive until the 8:43 train in the evening, and I very unwisely devoted the rest of the day to expecting her. I might better have dwelt upon the beauty of patience and serenity until these qualities again possessed me.

I do not know how the afternoon passed, for I was not busy with it. I sailed alone to Noank in the evening, and stood in the dark, on the station platform, waiting for the train, with all the foolish impatience of any haphazard man.

When Nancy stepped out and stood before me, the light of the car on her upturned, beaming face, her arms full of bundles, her eyes luminous with good spirits and affection, I looked at life more tranquilly. I lit my pipe, took her bundles, and walked slowly along the winding street, listening to her budget of news and enjoying the best smoke of two weeks. But our devils are not removed by the virtue of others, and the delight we receive, even from those who love us, is short-lived, unless it finds a companion within ourselves to welcome it.

"Is anything the matter?" asked Nancy suddenly, her happy countenance becoming a shade more grave.

"I have had a hard week of it with Tom," I said.

"You have?"

"I have. I am amazed by the way he takes things here."

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Then all the devils I had harbored got up and talked, pouring forth the story of his faultfindings, his misgivings, his constant suggestions, involving expense and trouble. Our beautiful walk under the trees was lost to us. We reached the town dock, got into the boat and pushed off. There was no moon, but it was a clear, starry night, and a light breeze was blowing.

Nancy came to the stern seat beside me, laid her hand on my knee, and looked smilingly at me, her eyes expressing both amusement and affectionate sympathy.

"Never mind," she said, "he will be all right now that Ruth is here."

"As soon as she came, he suggested cots, a kitchen and a beefsteak. You laugh now, but you will see."

"I know," she answered softly, "but remember how much you wanted them to come and what good friends they are."

"That's what I ought to do, I know. It's a shame for me to be this way. But I expected so much from Tom."

During all the voyage to the island, Nancy listened to me sweetly and sought to divert my thoughts to Tom's virtues, to her own presence and to the beauty of the night.

It was very dark on the beach when we landed, but over the top of the brush above us, the light from the cabin windows shone with a soft, comfortable glow.

"I am so glad to get back," sighed Nancy. "It's home to me."

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She called a joyful announcement of our arrival, while waiting for me to anchor the boat for the night. Ruth looked from the window and answered her. There was an interval of silence, and then, what I had been hoping for happened. From the darkness came a sound of purring, and Yannie rubbed against Nancy's ankle.

"A kitten!" she exclaimed. "Why—when did you get it?"

She stopped and took it to her breast. It crawled to her shoulder, rubbed against her neck, and jumping down, came to me as I waded ashore.

"I thought she would be here to welcome you," I answered. "Wherever you go around here, day or night, you are liable to find that Yannie is with you. She does not mind the rain or wind. She has stayed out with me in the storm, dripping wet, and minded it no more than I."

"What a beauty! Here, Yannie, come along."

As we walked up the path, we met Betty, a little late, as usual, but friendly and interested, in her own more deliberate way. I could see that Nancy's delight in the kittens was all that I had expected.

Tom was in the hammock, stretched across the room. Ruth was sewing by the table. Nancy entered with that exaggerated demonstration of a natural good-will and delight that must always be a source of trouble to those who indulge it. There

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are few simple beings in whom nature has herself properly adjusted the instruments by which we receive impressions and express what they mean to us. Most of us have that to do for ourselves, but how few there are who realize it. We go rattling about together, exclaiming at the jolts, complaining of the misunderstandings and discords, and doing little or nothing toward the establishment of harmony within ourselves.

Tom is one who seeks honestly to express at all times neither more nor less than what he feels. I believe in this, and, except for these few weeks on the island, when I was all at fault, if I am not pleased with his attitude, the pleasure I take in his truthful expression of it suffices. Ruth has been remarkably well served by nature in this respect. Her emotions and her manners, like twins, go hand-in-hand, the one giving a natural and simple expression to what the other is.

There are times when most people would call Nancy affected, a word, like many others we use, that relieves us of the task of penetration. Tom thinks her so, and often adopts toward her an attitude of watchfulness, not very sympathetic and somewhat cynical in its nature.

It was Tom who taught me to appreciate a being like Sam, but he is not so apt to estimate truly a woman like Nancy. Such an attitude, of course, makes a tranquil

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friendship impossible. We four had found an almost uninterrupted pleasure in each other before this, because while I had lived with Tom, Nancy had only met him occasionally. She took him as my friend, was permitted to serve him constantly, and found a pleasure in doing so. When they met, she took his half-playful, half-cynical jibes and railleries in a merry spirit, artfully concealing the wounds from him and from herself. It is this method of defense such natures often employ that makes them seem affected and renders a correct reading of them difficult.

Nancy, easily led away by her impulses of good-will and generosity, giving an exaggerated expression of them in her eagerness to have all about her as happy as herself, exceedingly sensitive, quick to resent, and holding to her resentment with a passionate and bitter tenacity, was an easy mark for Misery, and she was hard hit by it.

The first evening was a very pleasant one. Tom was in an agreeable, quiet humor. He greeted Nancy's exuberant entrance with a jovial, skeptical glance, and retired again to the absorption of a pleasant reverie, humming a plaintive tune. Ruth entered at once into her mood, took her bundles from her, eagerly helped her to undo them, and exclaimed over their contents.

“What gay colors!”
“Aren’t they lovely?”

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“I should say so.”

“Only ten cents a yard at Loeser’s. Won’t they make pretty dresses? Short, you know—up to your knees. You’ll wear one, won’t you?”

“Of course, I will. It’s just the thing for here.”

“I wore my bathing suit before, but I thought these would be better. There is enough for us both. Now, how would you make them?”

Ruth has a fine knack for dressmaking, and in a twinkling she had conceived a design, marking the pattern on her person with a nimble forefinger as she rapidly explained.

“Great,” said Nancy, following her movements eagerly. “How simple that is!”

“I’ll be a sight with my thin legs.”

“No more than I, with my fat ones. We’ll wear red stockings, blue dresses and green sunbonnets. It’s color we want.”

Nancy ran upstairs and returned in a bath-robe.

“I’m going for a swim,” she said.

“Not to-night?” exclaimed Ruth.

“Yes, indeed, I’m used to it.”

“Won’t you take cold?”

“I never take cold.”

I was standing near the door outside. As she passed me, she asked in a whisper:

“Why are the windows all closed upstairs?”

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"To keep the dampness out," I replied solemnly.

She laughed softly and went to the beach. The sound of her splashing tempted me. I went to the ledge, undressed and plunged in. When I returned to the cabin, the girls were making a pattern for their dresses and talking in whispers. Tom was asleep.

At ten o'clock the girls went upstairs and threw down the ticks. Tom and I were to sleep below.

Even in July the nights were cold on the island, and if the wind was from the east, it frequently brought mist or fog or rain. Tom tumbled from the hammock and prepared for bed.

"We ought to have shut the doors and windows," he said. "It's getting damp in here. If we close up evenings until we get in bed, we can open the windows then and have fresh air and dry beds."

He shut everything but one window, and no wind came through that, and asked me if it would be enough.

"We can open more if you say so," he said hesitatingly.

"That will be all right," I answered, but Nancy, upstairs, was expressing my real sentiments as she talked to Ruth.

"I like to feel the wind blowing on me," she said.

"I can't stand too much of it," Ruth replied. "This damp air would give me rheumatism."

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I don't know how the matter was settled up there, but I could see in the morning that Nancy had not slept well. We had punched the house full of windows that we might have it wide open, day and night, in all sorts of weather. This was its principal charm to us. The wind and weather is to Nancy what a good name is to most women. Talk about her as you will, but leave her windows open and she will sleep serenely, providing she has not gained her way by distressing you.

And so it was with Tom and Ruth; they feared the draught and dampness, but they could take no comfort in a shelter where others were distressed.

I left Tom to build the kitchen alone. I can truthfully say that had I been entirely free to do so, I would have helped him. But the cabin was not all paid for. I was in debt to Nancy; there were other imperative calls for money from outside, and I had not written a line for over a month. You may have your island if you will take it, but you will find that no sea is wide enough to separate you from the world. All that has been undone on land will find you out. So long as we live, we must remain in the meshes that hold mankind together. Whether we move with the jostling crowds or dwell in isolation, we will gain only the happiness we create and add to the world's store of happiness.

All this I realized. I knew that I could

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not possess this fair retreat in idleness. I must be making some use of its beauty if I would continue to delight in it. I used to think that we should not work for money, but for the furtherance of our ideals. This is a narrow view. It springs from the egotism of the idealist. He imagines that his conceptions are altogether his own, and that he is bestowing what he reveals as a free and personal gift upon a world that declines to accept it at its peril. He who is able to perceive what the whole world is earnestly seeking is the real idealist. His power of perception is a gift to him from the people of all ages past and present. He only finds what all are looking for. It is there for him to find, because it is the next step in the logical advance of his kind. The ideal is what the world is to attain, and there are few who are not eager to know what this may be. All the world labors, and all the labor of the world promotes its progress. Money is as truly a medium of exchange in morals as in commerce. We must meet upon a common ground in all things. The brick-layer who lays bricks to suit the idealist will be paid by him from the proceeds of his poem. The poet who can present his ideal to move the mason will be paid by him from the wages of his trowel.

To enjoy my island cabin, I must pay some tribute to the world that gives it me. The needs of the world have opened mar-

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kets for both fish and philosophy, and it will give me a dollar for a dollar's worth of either.

I had not labored for a month. Necessity was beginning to sting me like a lash.

"Tom," I thought, "can spare a few days now. I will get to my trade and let him tinker at his wishes by himself."

He put up four shelves, fixed a large box to serve for a kitchen cupboard and table and measured the porch for the canvas. Ruth and Nancy were busy with their dresses. They were eager to see the effect of their designs, and they laughed and chatted amiably as their needles followed the seams and hems and button-holes. Nancy, however, could not sew constantly. She frequently put her work aside and went to the beach for driftwood, bringing up the dry pieces and piling them on the porch.

"I found a lot of your trash around here," Tom called to her, "and threw it in the sea. When Ruth is in a place two minutes, it begins to look like home."

Nancy opened her eyes very wide and laughed. It is her way of meeting unexpected pricks that do not quite wound her to resentment.

She took the bait pail and went for crabs. I heard her at the end of the island, talking to the cats. I went to the edge of the jungle and peeped over. She was wading

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in the water, Yannie on her shoulder, and Betty on a rock near by.

"We are just wild creatures," I heard her say, "you kit-cats and I. We are supposed to be domestic animals, you know, and to come in when it rains. We thought we could do as we pleased and be happy on this far-off island, with only the wind and the weather, the bugs and the birds for our neighbors. But it seems we are to be civilized. Never mind, my Yannie cat. Just try and not mind."

Nancy, with the kittens, pushed off in the boat, and sailed out to the pole buoy to fish. I took my pad to the rocks, where I could watch her as I wrote. But I could not write. All I could see in this vast scene of beauty was Nancy, in the little boat, striving in vain to reach the pole buoy. She pulled the sail in when it should be out. She came about the wrong way, and instead of taking the necessary long tack, tried to force the boat to a straight course. At last she abandoned the sail, and picking up the oars, rowed to her spot, threw over the anchor, and settled down to fish.

Tom came and sat by me. He had probably forgotten his lightly considered jibe at Nancy as soon as it was uttered. He was, at least, not thinking of her now, but of the serene and sunny day and of the conceptions their influence brought to him. We talked pleasantly together of imper-

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sonal things, until Nancy returned with her catch. I skinned the fish, Ruth cooked the dinner, and it was served on a wide, flat ledge by the water side.

In the afternoon, Nancy sailed Tom to Noank, that he might go to the sail loft for the canvas, while she did the marketing. They took five pails for water with them. I watched their voyage with a restless eye. They made a safe port, but it was by accident. A fair wind blew them over, in spite of the fact that Nancy paid little attention to sail or rudder. She followed a zigzag course, and betrayed the most complete ignorance of all I had taught her. I had remained behind to write, but my pad was a blank when they returned. My friends were here, and yet I felt a curious sense of desolation. Something was wrong with us. We all seemed to be enjoying ourselves, but I scented a thickening atmosphere of distress, and began to suffer in helpless apprehension.

In the evening, Tom and I sat upon the great rock, overlooking the island, and all its surroundings, while the girls were happily at work inside. Ruth had finished her dress and was helping Nancy with hers. We heard their low voices and their laughter, and were content with our silent reveries.

"The mist is falling," said Tom. "We had better go in."

The girls, arrayed in their gay new cos-

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tumes, received us after the fashion of light opera maids at a mountain inn. We looked them over and admired them. I built a fire, for a glowing, crackling fireplace is a thing to have when it is possible, and here, even in July, we were not uncomfortable with one. Nancy brewed us a milk punch, Tom sang a fine old German ballad, and we passed, by degrees, into a quiet, sentimental mood. And then came Memory, that strolling wight, half-minstrel, half-peddler, undoing his fiddle and his pack. We looked with tender eyes at the familiar wares he held before us, and listened to the strains of his bow until we were undone. The fire burned low, and some one spoke of bed.

"Look here," I said, "let Tom and Ruth have the attic and Nancy this room below. I will sleep on the porch. We can all have the air to suit us then."

"You can't sleep on the porch in this mist," said Ruth.

"Indeed, I can. I really want to. I'm not putting myself out. I have just found the courage at last to do as I long to do."

And it was so arranged. Nancy helped me make my bed on the porch.

"You have the best room of all," she said, holding her cheek to the wind and mist. "I see the stars dimly, as through a veil."

"Why is it that people shrink so from the rain?"

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"To save their clothes."

"That was how the habit began, no doubt, but now a man in rags will run to shelter. We have so separated ourselves from nature that we don't like to get wet. I love the rain. A drenching gives me the finest sensation I can feel. My whole body is thirsty for this good mist."

A little later I slipped under my covers with a sigh of content. I listened to the murmur of the wind in the jungle, to the wash of the tide, and with my face cool and wet, passed into a tranquil sleep.

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Chapter X

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WE build castles in the air, and fancy that could we dwell in them, with a few chosen friends, our occasional joys alone would interrupt our serenity. But these castles of the air are thin as air, and could we be transported to them, we would find them without form or substance. If we become citizens of the clouds, we must still build our habitations from the materials we carry with us. Let those who think they are unhappy, because of an unfriendly world, retire to a wilderness, and they will discover the source of all their sorrows is in themselves.

In all the world, there is no lovelier retreat than this island, where Nancy, Ruth, Tom and I were together for a month. And yet, we became more and more unhappy as the days passed.

Fogs were frequent in July. If Tom ventured to Noank, all the world was filled with apprehension until his return. The distant bank of mist, approaching slowly from the sea, was hailed with alarm. Or the day might be clear with us, while the horn at Race Rock, nine miles away, told of a fog down the Sound. In the ears of Tom and Ruth, its distant voice was ominous, and they listened, hour after hour,

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speaking of it now and then, watching the horizon, unwilling to venture from the island and viewing the indifference of Nancy and my own delight, as recklessness and folly.

If it rained, it was a dismal day.

Tom grew tired of fish, and made frequent purchases of meat and cake. If we did have fish, he wanted it boiled, for a change. Nancy would not consent to this, for her mood had grown bitter now, and the fish was always fried.

We now used five pails of fresh water where we had used one before. Ruth would not go to Dodge's Island to wash the clothes. She emptied the pails serenely, and we kept them full. But our serenity was gone. When we had used but a pailful or two a day, it had been easy to keep a supply on hand. This necessity had, in fact, been one of our sources of delight. During May and June, I would sometimes fill the five pails, and they would last us for almost a week, if we wished them to. But I managed to keep a pailful fresh without any special effort.

If I went for a sail, when the wish to sail moved me, I could put a bucket in the boat and fill it, if the wind and my fancy took me in the region of a well. If not, there was no distress. And now and then I could make the water an excuse for an idle hour or so, sailing to Noank or to Dodge's Island or to Mystic Island, as the

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wind might blow. On such voyages as these, I had been free to take my time, to study the tides and its courses, to lean over the edge of the boat and acquaint myself with the nature of the under world around me. In this way, I had learned where to sail, to keep with a vagrant current, when the tide of the channel was against me, for the water does not flow as a mass in one direction. And the grasses and rocks I had come to know became my guides if the fog overtook me.

But there was no idling now. There were times when the water was exhausted in the morning, and dinner must wait for a fresh supply. Wherever we went, the pails were with us. Tom heard that the water of the town pump was brackish, and it would no longer do. We must hunt through Noank for a friendly well, and carry our five pails to a distance.

The climax of our miseries came with Susan. We only needed this one addition to our household to disrupt it. Susan was Ruth's maid. She was anxious to come to the island and help with the work, if we would pay her expenses up and back. Under the circumstances, it seemed well to do this. Nancy could not trot in harness with Ruth as with Elizabeth. The housework had somehow become work again. All the romance was gone from it. Tom liked Ruth's cooking best, and as he is exceedingly particular and difficult to

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please, in this and in all affairs of the household, she was tacitly conceded the mistress of the cabin. Nancy would gladly have washed the dishes if she could have done so on the beach with sea water and sand, but neither Tom nor Ruth could have endured this. She busied herself gathering driftwood, going to market, fishing and keeping the bait-pail full. She took her clothes and mine to Dodge's Island and washed them. She was roaming the island or voyaging to neighboring shores, the cats for her constant companions, but she was not happy. For two weeks I did not hear her piping voice, nor see a cheerful look from her. When Nancy is bitter or distressed her face grows thin and unlovely. It is both pathetic and repellent. She becomes twenty years older in a moment. Her eyes, at other times clear, luminous, alluring, grow hard and treacherous. She sees then nothing but meanness in the world.

Susan, when she came, was constantly troubled with a stomach ache before meal time, and always recovered when it was served. Ruth seemed to have as much to do as ever. She worked, while Susan fished and complained.

Every day Nancy went to Noank for the mail and groceries, taking a pail or two for water, if she went alone, and all five, if Tom or I went with her. One morning, the sight of the pails all empty irritated

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her. She took them to the boat and suggested to Ruth that Tom go with her to carry them from the well.

"I don't think he can go over to-day," she replied, "he is painting."

"Then Susan had better come and help me with it."

Ruth looked across the water, in all directions.

"I heard the Race Rock horn a while ago. I am almost afraid to let her."

"Well, I can't carry all the water alone."

"I'd like to go," said Susan. "I've not been to Noank yet. I'd like to go."

Ruth consented pleasantly. There was not wind enough to sail, and Nancy rowed over. They were not gone long before the distant growl of the Race Rock horn came up the Sound.

"I wish I had kept Susan here," said Ruth.

Tom looked up from his easel, near the door, and scanned the southern horizon.

"The fog is coming on this time, sure enough."

Ruth watched the advancing cloud of mist. North Dumpling and Fisher's Island were swallowed up. Long Point grew dim, and disappeared. A thin vapor floated before the town of Noank, and presently obscured it. An impenetrable fog was about us. We could not see the edge of our island. Even the bushes close to us were ghostly.

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"They probably will wait until it clears," said Tom.

"Yes, I guess Susan has sense enough to stay. I don't believe Nancy could get her to start back in a fog."

"Well," said I, "you may be sure they will arrive here safely if they start."

"People just go round and round in a fog," said Ruth.

"There are people in Noank that have been lost for hours right off here," said Tom.

"Nancy has come through safely before. I will go to the beach now and then and call. The light-ship bell and my voice will guide her."

"Sounds are misleading in a fog. The fog might easily take them away. And if they don't keep clear of the channel, a passing boat might run them down."

"I don't believe Susan will start until it clears. She has good sense," said Ruth, in an effort to remain tranquil.

I went to the beach and shouted. From far away, through the dense white vapor, came a faint call in answer. It was Nancy's voice. Listening intently, I could now hear another voice raised in constant screams. I shouted again, and heard Nancy's answering call. Then the voices were silent. I shouted at intervals, and presently I heard the sound of oar-locks. The fog lifted for a moment, and revealed the boat headed straight for the island, not five

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hundred feet away. Nancy was rowing steadily. The fog enclosed them. The sound of the oarlocks was lost in the panting of a naphtha launch that loomed suddenly near the beach, and, circling about, disappeared again. It returned in a few moments with our boat in tow. Mr. Rathbun, hearing the screams of Susan, had put out from Noank to the rescue.

"It was good of you to come," said Nancy.

"I see you were making port all right," he replied, "but we thought over in Noank something was wrong with you."

"I don't wonder. All that screaming was pure insanity,—nothing else. But it was good of you to come, just the same."

The ghost of Mr. Rathbun waved its hand and vanished. The girls came ashore. Susan went to the house with Ruth, loud in her complaints against Nancy, and proud of her violent clamor. She seemed to think she had just escaped death by virtue of her shrieks. Nothing was said of Nancy's good rowing and her true homing instinct. Susan was the hero of the occasion, and Nancy was the culprit.

"She was as mean as she could be to me," said Susan.

"I told her," replied Nancy, "that if she screamed again, I would not row another stroke. We were as safe out there as we are here. I knew I could keep a straight course, and I did so."

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"Susan had good sense to scream," snapped Ruth. "I don't wonder at it. And she was over-persuaded to go, in the first place."

Then Ruth burst into tears, distressed beyond control by her own anger and anxiety. She looked appealingly at Tom, and hurried upstairs, saying:

"I am sorry it happened, Tom, but I am responsible for that child."

Nancy turned to leave the house, but I called her back, and drew her to a seat beside me. Tom was exceedingly troubled. He looked at us with the best expression in his eyes I have ever seen when they are turned toward Nancy, and said sincerely:

"It's too bad. I will go away, if that will do any good."

"That's not the way," I answered earnestly.

Tom followed Ruth upstairs, and Nancy and I went to the beach.

"I am angry—angry," said she. "Can you blame me?"

"It is never a question of where the blame lies," I said. "Let's not be angry, if we can help it. It is not lovely. It disfigures us as much, whether we or others are in fault."

"I know. I am doing my best. If it were not for you, I would have left here a week ago, or asked them to. I know I am hard to endure just now, but I can't help it. I have longed so for this island,

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and worked so hard to get here. They don't seem to enjoy it much, and they are spoiling it for me."

"It's all my fault," I exclaimed. "When you came up this time, I met you with complainings. I began at once to force unpleasant things upon you, and I have not since helped you as I should, to meet them properly."

Tom came to us and asked us to come back. "Ruth is all right now," he said gently.

We followed him to the porch, and found Ruth, smiling and tearful. Nancy tried to greet her cordially, but her heart was sore and her effort painfully apparent. The quarrel was over, but its taint remained.

After this, we all tried bravely to be happy. When we came together, we talked politely. We were solicitous as to each other's wants, trying to resign ourselves to them. Then came a second outburst, as unexpected as the first. But as this one served to reveal my own shortcomings, I can relate it with a better zest. No one can know with what misgivings, what shame and groanings I have been tattling of my friends. I cannot do them justice. I can only ask indulgence in this use I make of them. As I look back upon my lines, they seem to form but an abusive tirade against the three persons in the world whose virtues I admire most.

Of the four, I was, in reality, the most

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disagreeable. You can surely see me stalking through this narrative, the overbearing, self-satisfied man I was. The truth we proclaim, the beauty we depict, is by no means lost, because we fail to live by it. What I perceive is valuable to me in just so far as it becomes my life, but if I fail to profit by what I see, another may give it a being in himself, and so make it good. As for me, if I have been saved from becoming the unbearable champion of ideals I do not follow, it is because old Captain Louis, after sixty years of the sea, is now in his haven, sitting under a huge cherry tree that shades his dooryard, working at his weedless garden, tinkering in his woodshed, or dozing in the evening in his corner of the kitchen, behind the stove. There is an old-fashioned well under his cherry tree, with a bucket and windlass. It is the best water in Noank, and we went there frequently for a drink or a pailful. Close to the well was a perch where an ancient parrot stood with ruffled feathers, rolling a wicked eye at me, and muttering to himself.

I first saw the Captain in a little wood-shed near the well. It was dark in there, and his form was vaguely outlined. He had just finished a washing, and was wringing the clothes through a wringer. He was very short and thick-set. His broad back was humped, and his head was very large. He looked like a gnome at work. Another

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day I entered the yard through a gate in the back fence, and as I walked up the path, I heard the sound of a hammer in a little outhouse close to me. I stopped at the open window and looked in. The Captain was putting up a shelf. I spoke to him, and he turned toward me. This was the first time I had seen his face, and it was a surprise to me. It was broad, coarsely formed, misshapen with age and wrinkles, and dyed with the indelible stains of weather, but I had never seen a sweeter human countenance. The broad mouth smiling up at me, the dim, gentle eyes, the soft, full voice with which he answered my greeting, warmed my heart, and caused me to linger near him, though I had nothing to say. I saw him again in his garden, bending over a row of corn. He leaned on his hoe when I approached, and gave me a smiling welcome.

"I hear you were once a sea captain," I said.

"Aye," he answered slowly, "I sailed the sea for sixty years, and two and forty on 'em in a ship of my own. I was master of three good ships. One went to pieces on the rocks off Gibraltar; one was burned by pirates off the coast of Africa, and one was sunk by a Confederate gun-boat."

As he said this, he looked so out of place, leaning on his hoe, that I asked him if he was contented here.

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"I can't complain," he said. "I've had my life. I'm living on borrowed time, an' I can't complain." With a glance whimsical and pathetic, he added: "I do sometimes wish I could be young again, for I miss the sea."

His voice was so mellow, his smile so sweet and simple, that my eyes filled, and I walked away.

"Now, during these days I was having a hard time with Nancy, teaching her to sail. Wherever we went, she would take her pastille box, her bottles, her purse, her pad and her handkerchief, holding them in her lap. She could not make a move in the boat without first dropping and picking these things up. We were constantly upon the water, for we had much to talk about alone. Our relations with Tom and Ruth formed a restless theme. When Nancy has turned from a friend, she becomes as unjust to him as she was generous before. The bitterness of her attitude now toward Tom and Susan appalled me. But the thing that moved me most was her own distress in her bitterness. It was now my one concern to banish her resentment. I could see that Tom was beginning to realize his own misconduct and was seeking to amend it. If Nancy would but become her generous and open-hearted self again, we might all be happy here.

I blamed myself for all my complaints against him. I spoke to her of his fine.

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sympathetic qualities, of his friendly acts for me. She tried again and again to yield to my pleadings, but the blood in her veins still smacks of her ancestors, who dwelt in the hills of Ireland, and held to a feud for a thousand years. But I believe that she would have prevailed against even this inheritance if I had not interrupted my plea with abuse. We sailed as we talked, and my recommendations of patience, sincerity and gentleness were frequently cut short, that I might scold her for her carelessness.

We sailed to Dodge's Island one evening for water. A furious storm had been raging all day, and prevented our going before. At sunset the wind abated some, but it was still a gale. I had learned to push my boat from shore, its nose toward the wind, and to see that Nancy's lap was rid of its trinkets, and her rudder ready to slip in place, before a move was made. We got off successfully, and sped past the rocks at the end of the island, and out to the channel with a speed that made our blood tingle. I think there are few sailors who would have risked a twelve-foot sharpie in such a wind and sea. But men are truly saved by faith, and in such matters Nancy and I had the faith of saints, and we felt secure. There was one long gash of crimson in the sky above Noank. Except for this, it was black and lowering above and around us. Huge masses of clouds were scudding overhead. The rush

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of wind, the wash and roll of waters, the dashing of the boat upon the waves, filled our ears. Tom and Ruth were sitting on the observatory rock, watching the storm. They disappeared, and the island itself became but an obscure shape in the darkness.

"Oh!" cried Nancy, as she gripped the straining rope and laughed at the water dashing over her, "what a joy this is! I have not been so happy for a week."

"Nancy," I shouted, for the wind whirled my words away, "take this spirit back to the cabin with you, and all will be well. To-day Ruth asked Tom and me how to cook the fish. I did not care myself, but I did not know what to say. I was afraid if Tom told her to boil it, you would be angry, and I was afraid he would complain if I said to fry it——"

"I don't like boiled fish, and I love it fried," interrupted Nancy. "Tom says he don't care for it either way, but I notice that he eats his share."

"I would rather eat it raw and be pleasant about it," I replied, irritation and the wind now raising my voice to a yell. "But I started to tell you this to show that Tom has changed. While I hesitated, he looked up and said pleasantly, 'For my part, I would like it fried.' Now, Nancy, please be good again. Be gentle and warm-hearted for your own sake and mine, if for nothing else." The sail caught my eye. Nancy had pulled it in too close, at the same time

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changing our course to one straight before the wind. "Let the sail out!" I bellowed. She gave it a startled jerk and the wind, catching it behind, threw it violently over the boat. The rope was torn from her hand. We dashed sidewise over a hissing billow, and the crest of a second one broke over us. We would have been capsized, if Nancy could have held to the rope. As it was, we kept our keel, but the sail was now free and was hanging straight before the boat over the water. I clambered to the prow and, hugging the mast, tried to pull the sail around. I could not move it against the wind with my short purchase. I slipped the end of the pole, that held it stretched, from its noose at the mast, and, shaking it free at the other end, put it in the boat. The loose sail cracked and flapped violently. Reaching out on each side of the mast, I managed to pull it in by degrees, and to fasten it. There was now no danger of capsizing, and I could row to shore. But that was unnecessary. The gale rushing in our direction blew us before it, and landed us safely on the beach of Dodge's Island. We filled our pails in silence. I put the sail in shape again, and we started back. It was now a voyage against a head wind, and we must tack far out beyond Ahoy, through the tossing tide race of the channel. Nancy took the seat in the centre.

"You sail," she said.

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"No," I replied. "You will either sail this boat correctly, or you will never go alone again."

She bit her lips and changed places with me, gathering up her trinkets and almost lurching headlong overboard in her effort to hold them. I caught her arm, got her to her seat and snatching the pastille box, the bottles and the pad, threw them in the sea. I brushed the purse and handkerchief to the bottom of the boat and kicked them forward.

"Now," I roared, "you sail us home. I will not help you out of any trouble that comes from carelessness, if we drown for it."

For nearly two hours, we were tossed about in the storm and darkness. I was frequently obliged to bail. Nancy, her face white and drawn and miserable, handled the boat as if inspired. Not a word was spoken. We came to our beach with a rush and took the pails out, half-full. In spite of the wildness of the night, Yannie was close to the surf, watching for us. Nancy picked her up and, holding her to her throat, stumbled up the path to the cabin. I made the boat secure and carried the pails to the kitchen. Tom and Ruth were still on the rock, but came in presently and went upstairs. Nancy made her bed inside and I took mine to the porch. We smiled an apologetic good-night, but our hearts were heavy and sore.

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The next morning, after a subdued breakfast meeting, I sailed Tom to Noank. He was going into the country for the day, with his easel to paint a farmer who had agreed to pose for him in the field with his ox-team and plow. I returned to the Island, and, going to the shelter of the rocks, sat down dejectedly. In a few moments, Yannie jumped to my knee. As I stroked her head and listened to her gentle purr, I could have wept. Nancy joined me, her face hard set with a purpose.

"I have something to say," she said.

"What is it?"

"Do you know what is troubling me most? You are doing nothing. For two months you have not written."

I knew what was in her heart. She was afraid that in helping me she would destroy me, that I would become idle and ineffective; but her words stung me none the less.

"When I write," I exclaimed, "I wish to tell of the beauty about us and our delight in it. How can I do that in this present wretched atmosphere?"

"You could do nothing before, because you were too happy. Now you are too miserable. It makes me wretched to say this to you. I care nothing at all for the money you owe, but it is because I know you think of it and because you will be dissatisfied with yourself, that I cannot see you idle. I am miserable!"

For the second time in my life, I now

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saw Nancy break into sobs. She checked them presently, and said:

" You have become cold and tyrannical. You think I am unjust, and I think you are. Since we feel that way, we had better separate. I have decided to leave. I cannot stay here!"

" You shall not," I said. " I will go myself. I will go at once. You can come with me now to Noank, and bring the boat back. You can telegraph for Elizabeth and Jim. I will go at once."

I got up and strode to the cabin. Nancy followed and wished to help me pack my bundle, but I would not let her.

" Go downstairs," I said, " and wait for me."

" You have bullied me until I can't stand it," cried Nancy, stamping her foot. " Even Tom and Ruth have noticed how cross you are to me."

" So you have been talking me over between you!" I exclaimed.

" We are your friends."

" They are no friends of mine if they speak of me to you like that."

" You know they are. We all love you dearly. Don't go."

I waved her aside, tied up my bundle, and walked down to the ledge, where Ruth and Susan were fishing. Nancy had preceded me and told Ruth I was going, and why.

" Good-bye," I said, holding my hand

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toward her. She kissed me and begged me not to go. "Wait until Tom comes back," she pleaded. "Don't go."

I went to the beach, followed by the girls.

"Tom and I had a quarrel once," whispered Ruth. "I was peevish, and he left me and said he wasn't coming back any more. But he did come back that night, and I was the happiest woman in the world. Don't go."

Nancy and I got into the boat and pushed off. Before we had reached the bush buoy, Nancy looked at me with the light in her eyes that is irresistible, and said softly:

"Please come back with me."

"All right," I said. "I will."

"And don't be cross with me."

"I will maul you unmercifully until you learn to sail," I replied. "You must expect nothing else than that. Do you know why all sea captains are such gruff old fellows? Those who sail a boat safely, must move quickly, and a skipper must have instant obedience. To get this from his crew, he must hold a hard hand over them. As a passenger, I could be good to you, but you wish to sail, and I must hammer your feminine habits out of you, and force you to move quickly and keep your whole mind on the wind and sail."

As I spoke, the gentle face of Captain Louis rose before me, and I heard his mellow voice repeating "I miss the sea." I tried to imagine his roar of wrath, his face

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glowering fiercely upon his surly crew, but the kindly eyes and broad, smiling lips would not obey me; they were kind and smiling still.

This made me thoughtful. We sailed within hailing distance of the Island, and shouted to Ruth that we would both return. Then we made for Noank. Nancy looked young again and quite happy, but we were both very quiet. While Nancy was shopping, I strolled round to Captain Louis's. I wished to see him, to talk with him, and yet I hardly knew why. He was in his rocking-chair, behind the stove, the old parrot on a perch beside him. This bird was forty-one years old. She was a malicious creature. She permitted the Captain to maul her as he pleased, but no one else could touch her. The Captain had bought her fresh from the shell in South America, and brought her home. There were years at a time when the parrot was with Mrs. Louis and the children alone. They could feed her, but if they came too near, she bit them. However long the voyage, she talked of the Captain during his absence, and greeted him joyously on his return. She called him Father. Now they were seldom apart. Their plates were side by side at the table. The parrot ate with a spoon and helped herself to her food.

The Captain was born in France. Mrs. Louis comes from the best and purest of

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New England stock. She is a very intelligent, very positive old lady, with white hair, fine, bright eyes, strong, sweet face and a voice as clear and good as a woman's at forty. She can only move with great difficulty by the aid of a cane, because of rheumatism.

The captain helps her therefore with the housework. I have usually found her in her chair by the window, sewing.

This morning, she was standing by the table, making a pie.

"I declare," she said, as I entered. "This is the wrong fruit. You will have to get me another can—currants."

The Captain started from a doze, got up slowly, and, seeing me at the door, invited me to a chair. As he got up, the parrot opened her eyes. She, too, had been dozing. She moved restlessly on her perch, watching the old man closely. The Captain went outside to go down cellar, and the parrot called anxiously, "Father! Father!" She craned her neck and cried softly to herself until the Captain returned. Then she nodded on her perch again.

"I was just taking a little nap," said the Captain. "I don't know why it is, but I seem to sleep a good deal."

He beamed upon me with the most ingenuous friendliness. He reached out, and absently touselled the parrot's head.

"Captain," I said, "you were sixty years at sea, were you?"

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"Aye—for sixty years I sailed the sea, and two and forty on 'em in my own ships. One was lost on the rocks off Gibraltar and one the rebels sunk and one was burned by the pirates off the coast of Africa."

"You must have had all sorts of crews in those forty-two years."

"Pretty much every kind," he said, with a smile and nod.

"Ever have any trouble with them?"

"Never a cross word or look."

"How did you manage them?"

"Just told 'em what to do—gave 'em good rum, good food, good tobacco and good pay. Never spoke a cross word to one on 'em."

"That's rather remarkable, isn't it?"

"I don't know," he said slowly. "I never thought much about it. Your asking me now just made me think how it was."

"He's a great one to have things kind of pleasant and agreeable," said his wife. "I tell him sometimes," she added, with an amiable shake of the head, "he's most too much that way."

"Yes," he admitted with an apologetic smile and glance, "I *do* like things agreeable. I'd a been a poor Captain, I guess, if it hadn't been for the good feeling we always had all round."

I left him with a full heart. This unknown man, scarcely noticed by any one

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but his wife and parrot, who could say so little and who had done so much—how sublime he was! I stood at his gate and looked back. I blessed him for his revelation. I joined Nancy at the corner, and walked with her to the boat.

“Will you sail, Nancy?”

We smiled upon each other, and as we moved from the dock, glanced across the water toward the island with returning contentment.

“Surely,” I thought, “if he could encompass the seas with every kind of crew for forty-two years, and not speak a cross word or give a harsh command, I can teach one willing woman how to sail without abusing her.”

All the way over we talked of the wind and its ways with a boat. We experimented and laughed at mistakes, and tried again, until we corrected them.

Ruth met us on the beach, and we made merry over our follies. The afternoon was clear, and I took my pad to the shade of the great rock and wrote. The wind died away, and a soothing quiet was about us. I heard Nancy singing. As the evening approached, I went to the beach to watch the brilliant afterglow of the sunset. The water between the island and Noank was very still. All the world seemed hushed and waiting. A sudden impulse possessed me, and putting my hands around my mouth like a trumpet, I called, “Hello!

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Tom!" There was a full minute of profound silence, and then from the darkness under the hill of Noank, came a familiar voice, faint and clear:

"Hello!—Come over."

"All—right," I hallooed.

The girls came hurriedly down the path, and marveled. I pushed off in the boat, and rowed away for Tom, singing as I rowed.

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Chapter XI

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AUGUST and September were two wonderful months for me. Tom and Ruth returned to the city the last of July, and no amount of persuasion could tempt them up again. Every Friday night brought Nancy and Elizabeth, who remained over Sunday. My five days of solitude each week were days of delight. The apparently aimless hours of reverie were over, for I was now at work with my pad and pencil, and I began to find a purpose in what I saw and felt. But I will show you a letter presently, which, written at the time, gives a truer picture of these days than I can now create.

It is necessary first to tell how a new member of our family came to us. The pleasure we had found in Yannie and Betty caused us to wish for more creatures like them.

"I would like the island filled with cats," said Nancy.

"If I only had a good dog!" I kept repeating. "I would not part with our cats, but I long for a dog."

Royal is the real keeper of Mystic Island. He is a huge brute of a beast, of many tribes. He owes his color to some bygone

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Irish setter; his build to a Newfoundland. I think there is some mastiff blood in him, as well. Gibbie's anger is the one thing in the world of which he is afraid, but this is because he loves his master. Except in this, he knows no fear. He would leap into the belching cannon's mouth. He permits Gibbie to say who shall come on the island and who shall not, remaining quiet and watchful, ready to receive a friend, or rush a designing intruder. He is not permitted to go to Noank, for at the sight of another dog, he becomes unmanageable. He seems to have no sentiment in this respect, and will kill a spaniel or a bulldog with equal relish. He has never found his match in a brawl. There are from ten to fifteen cats on the island. Royal has been there seven years, and has killed more than thirty of them in that time. He has not tasted cat flesh for two years, however, for the present inhabitants are descended from those grown wise in avoiding him. They dwell under the house. There they come into the world, and are securely guarded until old enough to leap for their life. There is a little hole under a step at an unused kitchen door, opening, at the back of the house, onto a wide grass plot. The cats slip through this hole and lie in the sunlight. But they do not sleep. They are ready to disappear at an instant's notice.

"I will have a kitten or two for you

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soon," said Mrs. Wilcox one day. "I can hear the litter under the house, but the old cat has not brought them out yet."

"Can we have them all?" asked Nancy.

"If you don't take them, they will be drowned. We have all we can keep."

The litter, however, was composed of one.

Nancy and Elizabeth were obliged to leave Sunday night without seeing it. On Wednesday, Sam brought it over to me. It was about three weeks old, a little black and white ball of fat and fur. Sam unpinned his coat pocket, pulled it forth and placed it on the porch. I caught one glance from its eyes, but before I could move, it had dashed under the house. This kitten had brought its terror with it. It did not see my friendly look, it could not hear any comfort in my voice. During the day, I called to it in vain. It remained hidden. The next morning after breakfast, I heard its anxious cry. Yannie and Betty pricked up their ears, and, trotting from the room, looked under the house, craning their necks, sniffing and listening. The cry was repeated, and Yannie crawled under to investigate. A little later, she returned, bringing the stranger. When I appeared, she dashed from sight again. I was tempted to leave a dish of milk near by and go away, for I knew the kitten must be hungry. But that would not do. She must learn, first of all, that she was safe here and

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she must be brought boldly to her food with the others. It required the rest of the week and the most systematic patience to accomplish this. By Friday, she was beginning to make herself at home. Her round, staring eyes had lost their senseless alarm. She came and went with her companions, playing with them, eating with them and joining in the hunt for bugs and grasshoppers. As her terror left her, she became possessed of a greedy, selfish spirit. Whether in man or beast, it is true that the soul which flies in a panic when pressed, will as readily impose upon kindness. Fear is but one manifestation of a narrow, self-centered selfishness, and greed may easily replace it. I first named this kitten Dunning, but we shortened it to Dump, a word expressive of her spirit.

The girls listened to my account of her behavior, and seemed to find a curious pleasure in her. They laughed at her increasing boldness, for she became now as forward as she had been wild before. She was the first at the food dish, and ate more than both the others. If she wished for a nap, she would never find a place under the bushes alone, but would seek first the plump shoulders of Elizabeth, or if this was denied her, she would curl about Nancy's throat, a resting-place quite as soft, but not quite so spacious. If neither of the girls could take her, she would hunt up Betty and lie down across her body.

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In September, the mackerel came in great numbers, and I was able to get my food, take my pleasure and compose my chapters, all at the same time. Mackerel fishing is, for one of my stamp, the most attractive kind. The only bait required is a little piece of white rag, which lasts all day, and does not once require replacing. At this time of the year, there is always a good breeze. Every morning, when the breakfast was over, I spent an hour or two gathering wood, bringing up the chips and small pieces, and using the saw and axe on the logs and barrels. I now required a fire whenever I was in the cabin, and during the evenings, the louder it roared and crackled, the better it was, for, with the falling of the sun, the watery world around me grew cold and drear.

But the days were warm with sunshine, and when the wood was gathered, I called the cats to the boat and pushing off, set sail through the run and off toward the channel of the Sound or the ocean. I tied the sail to an oar-lock, threw a small mackerel hook overboard and let it trail on the surface of the water, about fifty feet behind, tying the line to my finger. So long as we kept moving, it did not matter where we went, for the mackerel might be here or there, and so, with my pad on my knee, I sailed and fished and wrote, hour after hour. Yannie preferred to sit on the narrow prow before the mast and watch the water. Bet-

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ty slept on the seat beside me. Dump would lie across her or crawl to my shoulder, if I did not move about too much. When we struck a school, and I began to pull the mackerel in, the cats woke up, and all three gathered eagerly to watch the sport. Yannie and Betty never attempted to molest the catch, but I was obliged to watch Dump closely.

During these days, I had much to think about. I was not only meditating on the summer that was gone, in the hope of making some use of it, but our misunderstandings still grieved and puzzled me. I knew, also, that Tom and Ruth were not to me as they once had been, and that Nancy was still suffering from the wounds she had received and what remained of her own bitterness. The last Sunday in September and the first one in October she was not able to come up.

"But I have been able to do something that I know will console you," she wrote. "I have found you a dog—a pure-blooded Scotch collie—a son of Mr. Morgan's Ruffled Ornament. He is just three months old. We got him through Jim, who makes a great mystery of the way he came by him. I shall see that he is shipped to you tonight, so that he will be with you Sunday, that you may not miss Elizabeth and me. I wish that I could see the arrival, and witness the first lessons in his bringing up. You will have a busy, happy time with him,

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and Bess and I will try to imagine what is happening up there.

"And now I want you to know that I am succeeding better with my own self. I have not had a harsh nor an unkind thought since I came from the Island this time. Our talks have surely done me good, and I shall succeed, if only for your sake."

I read this letter with a full heart. My answer to it seems to me now but a poor expression of all that I felt, and yet to Nancy it was a true expression of it. I offer it here as the best explanation I can give of the nature of the relations between us. In this complex life of ours, wherein each must find his way through a maze of half-formed perceptions, beset by conflicting desires, laws, opinions and personalities, it seems impossible for any man to shape his course in accord with all his fellows. As for me, I wish to be most with those who, defective as I am, can use me most in their progress toward a happier and sweeter life. What joy or comfort comes to me in the process, I take with gratitude, but my own comfort or the love of others must serve the ideal as I see it, or I will let them slip from me, if I must. I know that, were I a wiser and a broader man, I could pursue such a course without prejudice to anyone, and so bring nothing but good to myself and others.

In this letter to Nancy, you may find all that there is to know of the bonds between us.

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I HAVE not been very lonesome this time. It does seem best for me to stay here, and I am glad that I can do it. From Tuesday until Friday I wrote constantly from morning until late at night. Then your letter came, saying you would not be up. My chapter was finished, and I was tempted to go down. I knew if I felt a sense of desolation here, I could not write, and I thought it might be wise to go to you and the city for a few days, while I was getting the next thing in shape. I did not sleep any Friday night. I could not get an idea Saturday, and I decided to take the evening train. Then I thought once more of the six dollars it would cost, of you, cheerfully and courageously working where you don't want to be, and I knew I must stay.

Yannie was at my feet looking up at me with questioning eyes.

"Yannie!" I said, "I shall stay. And since that is decided, how shall I be—desolate, restless, homesick, heavy-eyed and lonely, or patient and serene? We can be what we wish to be, Yannie cat, if we think more about that than of the things that would disturb us. I will be patient and serene."

So I put the sail in the boat, and went over to Noank in my old clothes and got the mail.

Your letter warmed me through.

Of all the countless things you have done

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for me, this is the most beautiful. I don't mean about the dog—that is one of the countless things—but I mean your loving attitude and my insistent requirements concerning you. A nature as generous and sensitive as yours, cannot afford to recognize resentment for an instant. If you do, you will have it as a frequent guest, for, of course, the fact that you possess these virtues makes you liable to the encroachments of those who have them in a less degree. The only way a sensitive person can remain generous and sweet is for him to love these qualities for their own sake. If we are more anxious to retain them than to lose them, we may do so by constantly increasing them and adding, for their protection, other virtues. If another injures us, or is unkind, or unlovely, resentment in us is neither kind nor lovely. It is as great a defacement of ourselves, without and within, as is the thing in our neighbor that calls it forth.

Many sensitive people, generous and sweet to begin with, become embittered, because, while possessing these qualities by nature they do not love them for their own beauty, and lose them in resentment. There are thousands who think it wise to become less generous as they find the world unkind. But this is not wisdom. We should not lose our virtues because many we meet do not possess them.

You are quick to see the beautiful and the

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ugly traits and habits in others. You love the beautiful and despise the ugly. This is the approved, orthodox attitude. Your view, however, is not orthodox. You perceive informally and true. But neither the orthodox view nor the orthodox attitude is good. We should not despise the ugliness of others. Loathing, disgust, and all kindred feelings, even ridicule, are as ugly as anything that can inspire them. To see the faults in others that we may help them, and correct our own, is to use our keener intellect to a purpose worthy of it. Otherwise we cut ourselves with our own sharp tools.

Wisdom is all in all. If we are wise we will be happy, beautiful and strong. You and I have forty years together. We must live them in this world as it is. We can do very little toward shaping others to our ways, but we can do everything with ourselves. Let us lose none of the delight we might have in each other. Every moment that we are unlovely is so much lost to both of us.

You tell me there have been many times when you have tried to conform to my ideal of you, for my sake. You say in your letter you are doing so these days. This is the greatest thing you can do for me. But I know it is not alone for my sake. If it were, you would not succeed. You are doing this most of all because you see truly what is lovely in character and because you love these qualities, and because you possess a

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sunny, warm and generous nature. I only serve as a prompter. You will, some day, become your own, entirely. Then peace will be with us.

I began this letter to tell you of the dog. They told me at the depot that there would be no express Sunday. I waited for the six o'clock train, and he did not come. The agent and Bill assured me several times that it would be impossible for him to get here until Monday morning, since he did not come then. So I returned to the Island to coax my lazy thoughts. All Sunday morning I sat by the door, gazing seaward, my mind alert, and willing, but chasing hither and yon, like a good dog that has lost the scent. It was a perfect September day. Since Tuesday, we had experienced breathless, sultry weather, the most oppressive of the season. For the first time, the mosquitoes came in numbers, and made themselves at home. Saturday night a strong north wind blew down and drove them off. Sunday morning it was still a gale, cold and fresh. As the day passed, the wind moderated to a good breeze. The water was all one shade of blue, dark and rich, the first fall coloring just laid on. Its surface was broken by brisk, short waves, with dancing peaks. They were not quite large enough to crest and break. A long line of schooners and smacks were bearing steadily up and down the Sound, and all kinds of smaller craft were criss-crossing

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over it. Their sails gleamed very white in contrast with the unusually blue water.

In my next chapter, I am to tell of—I have held my pencil poised for an hour trying to decide what—I don't know. Please send me a set of those I have written, that I can go over it all and see what it needs.

It seems to me I have failed to give any sense of our delight so far. In what I have written, I seem to be talking all the time, whereas, in reality, I was not. I said and thought all that I have written, and it is true that our enjoyment of a scene comes largely from the thoughts and emotions it awakens, and our ability to express them.

Emotions unexpressed produce melancholy, as I have found when here alone. This is the cause of much of the world's sadness. It is well to make this clear, for most of us long for beautiful surroundings that we may receive delight without much effort. But those who long for an island like ours, should know that its beauty would be lost to them when they cease to find a meaning in it to delight in, and if they failed to give any expression to what they perceived and felt. But I fear I have allotted too much of my space to this phase. It is only one of many. We found much of our delight in our activity, and in the long, silent hours, when we drifted, sailed, or lay upon the rocks and dreamed. But how can this be shown? Every day, we gathered driftwood, searched for bait, discov-

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ered new forms of life, and new habits. We fished, got the meals, scrubbed the cabin, added some adornment here and convenience there. Every day, these and countless other things, large and small, were repeated, and brought us each time a fresh enjoyment. How important it would be to show this in the smallest detail! It is hard to convey the delight you may feel in catching a floating stick from the water as you sail past it, in gathering up what has floated to your beach, in bringing a boat-load from some foreign shore you have explored.

It is still more difficult to shape the delight we felt in our housework, the drudgeries of life, and even in our inconveniences, so that another may see and feel it. If I fail, it will be in this.

All day Sunday I sat by the door, recalling, smiling to myself, making sudden sallies at my subject, sighing because it eluded me. Memory at her easel is prone to subdue her colors, so that even the joys of former times, portrayed by her, appear in too soft and tender hues. Time and again I held her hand, delaying and delaying, because of this. I want those days to have the true color. I must present them now, as they were to us then.

About five o'clock, a boy came around the corner of the cabin, carrying a box.

"Hello," I exclaimed, for he took me by surprise, "what's that?"

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“A dog.”

He put the box at my feet, and a little pointed nose came up between the slats. There was a low, mournful cry. I carefully brought the box inside and placed it on the floor in the middle of the room. I put the cats out, so that neither they nor the dog would be frightened. I got a soup plate of condensed milk, diluted, and put it near the box. Then I removed the slats so carefully that the little fellow was licking my hands as I worked.

“That’s right, Bobbie,” I said in a quiet, conversational tone. “You’re all right now.”

It was a critical moment as I lifted him from the box. It is easier to spoil a full-blooded Scotch collie than a sensitized plate. A blow, a fright, or even a hard scolding, will often ruin a pup of this breed in a moment, and once the damage is done, it can never be corrected.

Of course, the moment I lifted him out, petting and talking to him, he fawned at my feet, but the moment I removed my hands, he stood up and looked into my face, his nose in the air. This was a good sign, but it was his eyes and tail that must tell the story. The eyes were open, round, exceedingly bright, and without a shade of fear. But how susceptible! A soul, gentle and affectionate beyond our human conception, was in them. The eyes of most pups are gentle. There is something grave and

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heavy in those of a St. Bernard. A Newfoundland's are more inquisitive and playful. A bull's are more bold and watchful. Those of an Irish setter are a little stupid in comparison. But the eyes of an un-spoiled Scotch collie are more gentle than a fawn's, more alert than a young fox's.

Bob's were limpid bright.

I clapped my hands and reached for him quickly. He jumped back in a flash, pricked his ears, held his head up, and looked squarely at me. His eyes were sparkling like stars. His left ear lopped a little. His tail was straight out. This was the last good sign.

I showed him the plate of milk.

"Here you are, Bob," said I, "good dog."

He came to it eagerly, and lapped it up. I watched his tail. He dropped it while eating, but did not draw it under his legs. I filled the plate three times before he was satisfied.

I gave the boy thirty-five cents for rowing over. It was not too much, for there was a good wind blowing and a rough sea. I waited until he was some distance from the shore and then I opened the door and walked out. Bob was close at my heels. He tumbled over the sill on his nose, but was up in a moment and after me. I stepped up on the porch. He tried to follow, but could not. He put his fore paws on the edge, looked up at me anxiously,

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crying and barking sharply. I went to the corner, and leaning around the rainbarrel, called to him. He came scurrying around and followed the path after me down to the beach. The wind almost toppled him over, and he seemed surprised at it. The waves washing the shore caught his eye. He leaped into them, barked, caught at them playfully and ran out again to me, jumping up to my knees. He kept close to my feet, and I had to move carefully not to step on him. I saw that I must not play with him much. He is too nervous and excitable now. He must learn to look at things quietly, to form calm and correct opinions, before he is frightened by them. The traits that render him so readily spoiled are those that may make him the best of dogs. He never forgets. He is more generous and sensitive than even you. He will be guided eventually by the emotion that becomes dominant. If it be fear or grief, he will be a pitiful creature. If it be affection, and if the one he loves treats him wisely and quietly, subduing his flighty impulses, guarding him from injury and alarm until his judgment has matured, he will be a wise dog and a very brave one for affection's sake.

While we were on the beach, I kept a close watch on the path. At last I saw Yannie, attracted by the strange sounds, come slowly around the turn in the bushes.

I was glad that it was Yannie. She would be the most sensible and help me

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afterwards with the others. She saw the dog jumping about me and stopped, opening her clear gray eyes very wide, thrusting her head forward and crouching a little. The hair of her back rose slightly in a narrow ridge. I called Bob to me, and, sitting on a stone, took him to my lap.

"Come on, Yannie," I called; "come along." She looked into my face, stood up, rubbed against a bush and moved slowly toward me, stopping now and then to stare at the dog.

"Come on, Yannie. Come along."

I spoke in a coaxing, natural way, and snapped my fingers. When she heard my voice, she looked at me, and the quiet, sympathetic expression of her eyes returned. She stopped, however, to rub against every stone and to take a peep at Bob, while doing so. She jumped up behind me, purring. I reached around, and stroked her, bringing her by degrees to my lap. Bob, under my caresses, was lying blissfully in my lap. Yannie poked her head under my arm and her nose came in contact with Bob's. She sniffed at it, growled and drew back. Bob lifted his head and looked at her curiously.

"Good Bob," I said. "Good Yannie," still stroking them. Bob licked my chin, wagged his tail and looked at the cat again, cocking his ears. By degrees, I got Yannie, purring and growling alternately, into my lap and induced her to lie beside him quietly. Then I put them both down, and

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clapping my hands, ran along the beach, Bob bounding and stumbling and barking in front, Yannie trotting behind.

As we came back, I saw Betty sitting in the path, just where it leaves the bushes. She was craning her head, watching us, in great excitement. As she caught my eye, she recovered her composure. But there were unmistakable signs of profound emotion. She was exceedingly beautiful. Her body seemed very big, her fur fluffy and alive. Her eyes assumed their darkest shades of blue and green. They were sombre and wide, deep-set and watchful. She sat still upon her haunches, her tail, like a fox's brush, curled around her legs.

I called to her, but she would not come. She looked at me for a moment and fixed her gaze again upon the dog. Three times we ran up and down the beach, clambering over the rocks at the southeast point, Bob leaping at them, falling between them, panting and barking in his eagerness to go where I went, Yannie springing nimbly from rock to rock and keeping as close to me now as he. As we returned the last time, I ran ahead and up the path first, stopping to pet Betty. She humped her back into my hand and purred once; then she squatted on her haunches, watching the dog. Bob came clumsily after me, panting and stumbling. He passed Betty with an awkward bound, brushing against her. She did not get up, but drew her body and head



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away, laid her ears back, lifted one fore-paw and held it toward him, but the claws were sheathed and she did not touch him.

I was very proud of the cats, and gave them some fish for supper, keeping Bob inside. Dump was asleep in a basket in the kitchen, and coming forth when the meal was ready, ate two thirds of it, as usual. Then she returned to the basket. She had been spared so far because for the first few days, I thought she missed you and I don't like to kill anything just because I don't like it. To slay a cat, for this reason, is as much of a murder as if I slew a man.

A few moments later I returned to the kitchen, and Bob ran ahead of me, before I knew it. As he passed the basket, in a bound, Dump ducked. I was surprised at her calmness. She rose slowly and looked over the edge at him. He came running back towards me and this time there was an explosion. A flash of wild terror shot from Dump's eyes, popping them out like balls. She flew up in the air, all four legs stiff as rods, the claws exposed, her back and tail a-bristle. The violence of her start threw her back under the bench, spitting and scratching at the air. Bob wheeled about, flopped down on his haunches and looked at her, the picture of perplexed astonishment. I held him where he was, with one hand, and with the other, I reached for Dump, stroking her until she was quiet. I finally induced her to come out, and

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brought her close to Bob. She made a vicious reach for his face and backed off, spitting. The terror had left her eyes. They took again their natural expression—round, protruding, glossy, soulless. I walked by her, Bob following me. She watched us, but as we did not come too close, held her peace. When we went inside, she jumped to the window-sill and sat there, her face close to the glass, all the evening, watching him. Yannie came in once or twice to have a look at him and finally went out for good, seemingly satisfied and unconcerned. Soon after I was seated, with the lamp lit, Betty appeared in the doorway and looked at me and the dog at my feet. She walked across the room like one with a purpose, and jumped on my lap. She sat with her head over my knee, looking solemnly, sometimes sullenly at the dog. If he moved, she uttered an ominous growl. Then I would speak to her reproachfully, pat her head and say: "Good Bobbie. Be good to him, Betty, for he is just a foolish, tender-hearted pup." In a little while she ceased to growl, and once, when I had him stand up beside her, she permitted it without a protest. Before closing up, I put her on the floor and induced Bob to a frolic. I wanted her to understand that his wild, uncouth antics were harmless. She watched him a little contemptuously, I thought, and when he made a playful plunge at her, she gave him two swift but gentle raps upon the nose,

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with the mitten of her foot. Then she walked out sedately.

I blew out the light and went upstairs. Bob came hurrying and stumbling after me. So far, all was going well with my household. Bob had met with surprises, but no serious alarms, and the worst was over, so far as Yannie and Betty were concerned. I had my doubts about Dump, but I would do my best with her in the morning.

I forgot to tell you I gave Bob a bath with soap and soft water and dried him in the sun. He seemed to enjoy this, and was sweet and clean afterwards. When we went upstairs, I took my blue wrapper, and folding it, placed it near my tick, in the corner.

"There is your bed, Bob. Go lie down."

He cast a curious, crestfallen glance at me and turned toward the stairs. This was the first bad sign. There is something unpleasant in his mind associated with a bed. I coaxed him to it, however, and he lay there quietly through the night.

When I awoke in the morning, I saw him, lying with his head between his paws, watching me intently. The moment I opened my eyes, he lifted his head and pricked up his ears. His eyes snapped with inquiry. "Shall we get up?" they said.

"You bet!" I called. In an instant, he was at me and we raced downstairs together. I caught a towel and hurried to

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my bath. He followed me to the edge of the ledge. I dove in, and coming up, saw him looking toward me in still anxiety. There was a great relief in his eyes when he saw me swimming back. Collies do not take naturally to the water, and I don't know just what is the best way to teach them to like it. I must feel my way in this. He is not afraid of it, but if I threw him in, he might learn to hate it, and it would be all up with that. You can't drive a collie. If you attempt to, he will either die of a broken heart or become mean and stubborn and treacherous. Bob is the sort to die. This is no exaggeration. You could kill him with a little unkindness or the use of stern measures.

As I left the water, Yannie and Betty came running down. I could hardly dry myself because of them. Yannie caught at the towel and jumped on my bare shoulders, biting at my ears and chin. Betty rubbed against my legs, keeping between me and the dog. It looked very much as if they had talked it over during the night, under the house, and were now carrying out their plan.

We all went into the kitchen. Dump was on the bench. She bristled up at our approach, but became quiet again. When I stood by the box, Yannie and Betty stood by me; when I stooped to light the burners, they laid down close behind me, facing the dog. Wherever I moved,

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they were close to my feet. I mixed a wash-basinful of milk and placed it on the floor. They ran to it; Bob and Dump followed. All four were drinking together, without concern, their noses close together. I smiled in satisfaction, for fast friends are often made at a feast, and I thought my concerns were over. Bob's lusty lapping disturbed Dump. She jumped back and spit at him loudly. Yannie and Betty growled approvingly and Bob withdrew. I tried to talk to Dump, but there was no reasoning with her. She pulled away from me and went to the dish, looking up now and then to growl. When the cats were through, Bob finished the milk.

After breakfast, I went out by the door, put a board across the arms of my chair, after Tom's example, and began this letter to you. Yannie went off about her business. Betty jumped up on the board, and lying down by my pad, dozed and purred alternately. Bob lay at my feet, looking wistfully up at me for a long time; then he got up and looked about him.

"That's right," I said; "run around. You must entertain yourself, old man."

He trotted off, and presently Betty got down. She stretched herself lazily and followed him. I saw Dump peering at me from the kitchen porch. She saw Betty disappear around the corner, and vanished. There was mischief in her fishy eye.

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"My girl," I said, "I am afraid your end is near."

I wrote for a while, and laying my board and pad upon the ground, went around the house toward the beach. As I came to the head of the path, I saw Bob at the foot of it, looking wistfully up. Directly in front of him, barring the way, sat Dump, meeting every move of his with a menacing dab and a spiteful spit. Back of her were Yannie and Betty, very quiet, indeed, but wavering, I could see, between their natural decency and the barbaric impulses Dump's conduct stirred to life. I hurried toward them, hoping to reach Dump that I might reason with her before any injury was done. But when Bob saw me, he lifted his head high and dashed up the path. Dump made a wild reach for him, just missing his eye. Yannie and Betty made tentative dabs at him, but he escaped untouched. He followed me to my chair and stood up beside me, his paws on my knees, his head between them. When I picked up my board and began to write, he lay down at my feet quietly. He had learned to leave me alone when I took my pad and pencil. I had given him no instruction in this. His observation, feelings and affection had taught him.

In a few moments, Betty jumped into my lap and crept to her place on the board. For a time there was peace.

It was a glorious autumn day. A cool, strong wind was blowing from the south-

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west and it was pleasant to sit in the lee of the house, on the north side, upon the grass, in the warm sunshine. Back of me, there was a constant sighing and swishing among the tall bushes and vines of the jungle. The little patch of sod that forms the dooryard, is enclosed now by a fringe of goldenrod, in full bloom, wild rose-bushes, with here and there a belated blossom, young sumacs, about two feet high, and a tall grass, shaded green and silver and gold, with a heavy head like barley.

Bees and butterflies were hovering around the golden rod. It was a fragrant, delicately tinted border. Its graceful foliage stirred pleasantly in the spent breeze. Over it, I could see the white, clean ridge of rocks and the far stretch of water, shaded blue and amber. It rippled gently in the lee of the island. Farther out, there were white-caps. When I had looked a while before, it was wind-swept, dark blue and foam-crested between the island and Noank. I could now hear the surf washing the beach.

For some time I mused tranquilly in the sheltered, murmuring dooryard, now and then writing a line or two. As my pencil moved, Betty followed it lazily with her paw. Bob dropped his head on my foot and slept. Suddenly I heard a low growl. Dump was perched on the door-sill, her back ruffled, her yellow, pop eyes fixed on Bob. An impulse of rage possessed me.

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"You little devil," I thought. "Nothing interests you but food, a soft spot and trouble. You are not content with your own safety and comfort, but must disturb that of others. Why can't you leave him alone?"

My inclination was to put a stone to her neck and throw her in the sea. While I was weighing the matter, she crept under the chair. If Bob moved in his sleep, she growled and spit at him. Betty grew restless, and craning over the board, looked down at him, the shades of her ancestors darkening her eyes. I waited until my mood was gracious, and my spirit more sympathetic. Then I reached under for Dump and brought her to my lap.

"My girl," I said, "be reasonable. He is a kind-hearted boy, foolish and awkward now, but too gentle to harm you. Just look at this beautiful home of ours. There is nothing here to disturb its loveliness for us but ourselves. If you are a good girl, that is, if you will just not *hunt* for trouble, you may feed your fill here day after day and sleep your long sleeps. If you continue to be spiteful, you will corrupt our good conduct, make spitting creatures of us all, and work a trail of malice and fear through our Eden. Unless you mend your ways, you will be cast out. I will give you to the lobsters. Behold, I am your God—and I have spoken."

Bob, hearing my voice, lifted his head, and through all the discourse, Dump

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growled and spit at him, sticking her claws in my knee. Bob got up and walked away. He was evidently weary of this nagging. He vanished around the house, and Dump, jumping down, crept stealthily after him. Betty soon followed. I was very much perplexed. It was so easy to kill Dump. Was there no other way? I could not dispose of her elsewhere, for there is small demand for girl cats. It was so easy to kill her! It would be no credit to me. This act must lie at the end of my wisdom, and I disliked to feel it was limited by that.

All day I followed them about, coaxing, watching and instructing. I carried my pad and pencil, now writing on the windy beach, now on the sheltered ledge. Betty never left me when the dog was near. She would keep between him and me as we walked, rubbing against my legs. If I sat down to write, she was on my lap or my shoulder. Dump followed us persistently, preferring to stand near us, a little back of Bob, growling and fretful. Yannie roamed at large, pouncing upon grasshoppers and devouring them. She would disappear into the jungle for long periods. As I sat by the great rock, writing, I heard a sudden commotion in the bushes to my left. There was a shrill squeaking, and presently, Yannie ran out, her head up, her ears pricked, her eyes bright, a good-sized rat dangling from her mouth. She trotted past me and carried her prey to the dooryard. I fol-

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lowed quietly to watch. This was her first rat. At least, we have never seen any on the island. I knew that this would be important news for you. In fancy, I see your look of alarm as you read this, but I know your pride and confidence in Yannie will comfort you.

It was certainly brave of Yannie, and although showing some surprise and excitement, she handled the affair like an old hand. For some time, she played with her victim, allowing him to run under the house, to the edge of the tall grass, or behind the rocker of my chair. Then she pounced upon him, and brought him back to the centre of the open ground. She carried him lightly, uninjured, and dropped him on the grass. He grew accustomed to the handling. I was surprised to see him lift himself suddenly on his haunches and sniff at her face. Again he lifted his paws and felt of it. Once they rubbed noses, and finally the rat, no longer seeking to escape, scampered back and forth, seeming to enjoy the sport. I began to think another member had joined our household when, without warning, Yannie closed her teeth, first in his back, and then in his neck, and killed him. She ate the body under a little sumac bush, and I threw the remains in the sea. I was at first distressed by her conduct. It seemed unnecessarily cruel to win his affection, to bring a new delight into his benighted, outcast life, only to de-

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vour him. But I could not blame her long, for I knew that even we, with our wider knowledge, our holy ideals, our heritage of religion, philosophy and song, still eat the sheep that have clothed us, caress and feed the confiding creatures we would fatten for our stomachs, and for the sake of an Easter hat, drive our pets to the slaughter pen.

In the evening, I devoted myself entirely to Dump and the dog. I was this cat's judge and jury, her prosecution and defense. I labored to preserve her and to save myself from the hangman's task. Had I been more of a saviour and less of a judge, I might have succeeded. As it was, I failed. After three hours of exhortation, caresses and example, I kicked her from the room into the night, and closed the door.

She was the first at breakfast in the morning, standing, as usual, in the plate and menacing Bob when he came to eat. When she was through, I carried her to the beach, waded out to the fish box, opened it, threw her in, and shutting the cover, pressed it quickly under water with my foot. There was a great gurgling as the water rushed through the holes. I felt two sharp bumps against the cover. Through a crack in the top, I could see the black and white spots of Dump's body. They flashed across it at short intervals, as she swam swiftly in a circle. It seemed that she would never stop. I watched and listened with a growing sick-

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ness. I would have felt no horror if I could have justified the deed. Poor Dump was dying because my love was not perfect nor my wisdom whole. These are the forces that will some day abolish courts and penalties, but they were not strong enough in me.

I lifted the box and opened it. Dump was lying in a corner, limp and dead. I took her out, and carrying her in the boat, rowed some distance into the channel. I would not risk her drifting to my shore. I would not bury her on it. I wanted none of her in my soil. I felt a passing fear that she would return, in spite of the tide race; that I would not get rid of her; that I would find her returning body, day after day, in my tours on the coast, until it rotted.

Near the bush buoy, I got up, and reaching from the boat, dropped her overboard. She fell with a splash and sank slowly, head down, all four legs extended, her tail straight up. When I saw her last, she looked like a hide hung up to dry.

I solemnly rowed back and found Yannie and Betty watching me from the beach. Yannie jumped upon my shoulder, purring loudly. Betty looked quietly up. I put the memory of Dump from me. The whole island seemed to feel a relief, and I returned to my chair in the dooryard, a little quiet, perhaps, but serene.

*"'Tis the law, 'tis the law,
And the duty of the old turnkee."*

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Chapter XII

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AS the fall advanced, the forces of nature became steadily more active and insistent. All through September, the wind blew constantly. There were no gales, but there were no quiet days. The tides were higher and lower than before, rolling far in upon my beach, and changing its shape with its great washing eddies. Day and night, the sound of the water was in my ears. The wind-swept island was stripped of its leaves. The once green and fragrant jungle became a mass of bare sticks, and the cabin, no longer sheltered, felt every strong gust. The water was always blue and white-capped. The nights were lowering and intensely cold. In the sunlight it was still possible to find a warm corner in the shelter of the rocks, but on gray days the frosty air bit persistently and the wind penetrated to the bones. This little island, surrounded by such a reach of sea, is the last place to choose for the winter. I would prefer a cave in the woods, a steam-heated hall bedroom, apartments in the Waldorf, or an easy chair by the fireplace in Brooklyn, with Nancy, her mother and Elizabeth. It was not the cold nor the high weather that troubled me, but it was the lack of room and the right kind of labor,

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the continuous exposure. A mountain forest must be the place for winter. I would rather climb through the woods after partridges, and swing my axe, and find my night's shelter in a warm hut under the trees, than to sit in an open boat, fishing, with the bitter wind benumbing me, the ice-cold water dashing over me, and my only refuge a cabin set on a bleak hummock of the sea.

The first week in October Nancy and Elizabeth came up to help me close the cabin for the season. I expected them on the eight-forty-three train Friday night. For two days the wind had blown steadily from the west, increasing in strength with every change of the tide. The water, grown cold and heavy, rolled in ponderous breakers between the island and Noank. Friday afternoon the wind moderated and shifted east. The sky, clear before, became slowly overcast and dull. A frosty vapor came in gusts from the ocean. I kept a fire going all day, and if a piece of driftwood came to my shore, I brought it in to dry. The outgoing tide was always freighted with timber from the shipyards. Most of it remained in the channel, and passed around me to the north, but with this west wind, a barrel and chips would occasionally be blown from their course, and come ashore. I watched the water closely, and if I saw a fine oak beam, a barrel or a long plank drifting past, I ran to the beach and

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put after it with the boat. I wanted wood enough to last over Sunday. In all this labor, Bob and Yannie and Betty were as busy as I. If I ran to the beach, they were scampering before me, or close at my heels. They jumped in the boat as I launched it, Yannie crouching on the prow, Betty climbing to my shoulders, and clinging there through all my exertions. I could work without considering her, for though I pushed hard with an oar to get the boat off, and rowed with vigor, and struggled to seize the timber and make it fast to the boat, she remained comfortably on her perch, purring in my ear, regulating her position as my arm and shoulders strained and heaved. Bob, as soon as he was aboard, jumped to the stern seat, where, upon his haunches, with head erect and ears pricked, he watched all my motions with shining eyes. He knew what I was after, and if a small stick came near him, he would reach over the stern and pick it from the water with his mouth.

At sunset there was half an hour of calm, but the brilliant colors were suddenly swept from sky and sea. A long bank of clouds rose in the east and, filling the heavens, hid the moon and stars, and plunged my world into black night, premature and threatening. At seven o'clock I put two damp logs on the fire, placed the lamp in the window, that it might guide us on our return, and went to the beach. Bob and the cats were

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with me. By some means, still unknown to me, they had learned what this trip to Noank, Friday night, meant to us. Ordinarily, if I did not want them in the boat, a word was sufficient. But on these occasions, they became frantic. I had learned that commands were useless. It was so dark on this night that I could not see six feet before me. I got into the boat, and reaching under the seats, found Yannie and Betty. Bob was crouched in the prow. I threw them high upon the beach, and seizing an oar, attempted to get away with one strong push. My oar slipped on a flat stone, and I stumbled to my knees. I heard them coming with a rush, and before I could move, they were in the boat again. They did not try to hide this time, but crowded close about me. Bob was crying like a child, his whole body trembling. The cats yowled piteously. It is a terrible thing to be so closely related to creatures with whom you cannot speak. I could not tell them that they must stay behind, because the terrors and strangeness of Noank would confuse them; that we might become separated, and lost to each other. I could only suffer in sympathy with them and relentlessly ignore their appeal. I got the boat a few feet from shore, and threw them to the beach. Then I bent my whole strength upon the oars, until I was out of the lee of the island, and the wind could fill my sail. Half-way to Noank, I heard

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the voice of Bob raised in long-drawn, plaintive howls. The island was lost in the night. The light of the window, distinguishable from the planets only by its position and greater size, alone marked its location. But, in fancy, I could see Bob distinctly, sitting on the beach, his long nose pointed to the heavens, his sorrowful eyes rolled upward as he poured forth that complaint, more melancholy, more desolate than all earthly sounds.

Before I reached the dock, a rush of wind brought a storm of rain and sleet. The waves lifted me and plunged me forward. I swept past the moored boats, around the corner of the wharf, between the huge fish cars anchored here, seeing nothing, but following the oft-traveled way instinctively. I wore only a painter's suit of thin cotton cloth, an old slouch hat and rubber boots. I was wet through with rain and sea water. Fine sleet was clinging to me, but I was tingling with enjoyment, and I was warm. Perhaps, if I had seen the train rush in and stop, and move on again, bringing no one to me; if I had turned from the depot, and walked through the wet streets alone, and beat back across the mile of water against the wind and sleet alone, with another week of cold and dreary solitude before me, I would have shivered some. As it was, Nancy, Elizabeth and I walked merrily through Noank, stopping to make purchases and to greet our neighbors.

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"You are not going over to-night?" asked the grocer.

"We can make it safely."

"I wouldn't try it. You'll be drowned —you will. Yes, you will."

On the street, we met Mr. Ashbey. He stopped and peered into our faces.

"Well," said he slowly, "I'm not surprised to see you. It's your kind of a night. You remind me of a piece I used to speak, 'The Black Horse and Its Rider.' I was always a great hand to declaim, and I tell you, that poem seemed to fill me with fire. I would forget where I was. My whole soul was up and away where the battle was fiercest, alongside of the black horse and his rider."

As he had said this, his voice, strong and rich, rang in my ears. His eyes, usually mild as with dreams, flashed. For an instant, a magnetic influence, emanating from him, shook me to my feet. His eyes became mild and dim again, and he moved on with a friendly nod and smile. Here was surely a stray spark of that genius that, burning as a flame in some, illumines a way and inspires a world to follow it.

Captain Green joined us at the foot of the hill, and walked to the dock.

"I won't urge you not to venture over," said he, "for it would do no good."

"Don't you think it is possible to get there?" asked Nancy.

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"Everything is possible. It is probably safe enough for you people."

"You would not be afraid to do it," I said.

"I would go if there was any need. Of course, I'd go, but I would not choose to in your little boat."

"Well, Captain, I look at it this way. That island is ours, and our place is there. I should lose my comfort in it, and my delight in the wind and water if they kept me from my own. I don't believe they will. I feel safe in making this voyage, and I wish to feel so. I never care to risk danger for the risk's sake, but when I begin to dodge, and hide and hang back, and look upon life anxiously, I hope to die."

The wind shrieked over our heads, the rain whipped us, the roll and break of water sounded far into the darkness, we heard the boat pounding against the dock.

"None but those who brave its dangers, comprehend its mystery," murmured the Captain, in his beard. "They say," he added thoughtfully, "that our destiny is not in our own keeping. If that is so, why should we concern ourselves with it?"

Nancy and Elizabeth walked away until they were concealed by the darkness. When they returned, their rubber coats bulged with bundles under them. The Captain held the boat until we were seated, and gave it a strong push off, that rid us safely of the dock, and brought the nose

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of the boat around toward the wind; the sail filled, and, wrenching at my hand, hauled us swiftly from the land. I slipped off my boots and the girls removed their shoes. The bundles were composed of their skirts. If we capsized, they could slip from their rubber coats and swim.

The girls were saved from the anxiety they might have felt, by the darkness. They could not see the size of the billows. There is something appalling in a tempestuous sea when viewed from a little boat. The waves, rising on every hand higher than your craft, the great ridges of water rushing toward you with an appearance of power irresistible and relentless, towering over you as they advance, are terrible to behold if you are one to apprehend death, and to fear it. We had never been in so rough a sea, but the darkness hid its threats, and Elizabeth whose tranquillity would have been most disturbed, sat quietly where I had placed her, enjoying the adventure with us, for the rain and wind did not trouble her.

The girls, both on the windward side of the boat, acted as ballast. I sat upon the edge in the stern, and leaned far over the water, holding fast to the sail rope and the rudder. We shot through the water with great speed, for there is no better sailing craft than a long, narrow, flat-bottom sharpie, with a centreboard, if you keep it right side up. We would have made the

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voyage in ten minutes if we could have sailed straight for port. But the wind blew direct from our island, and we were obliged to make a long tack toward the north.

"Where is the island?" asked Nancy. "Did you leave the lamp burning? Can you see it?"

"Ours is the second light off the starboard bow."

"What is the first one?"

"I have been wondering. I can't make it out. It don't belong here. I thought at first it was on a large boat coming in, but it remains stationary."

We kept our eyes on this light, for we were making close to it. A huge shape loomed through the rain and darkness.

"It is a ship," said Nancy.

"At anchor!" I exclaimed. "It could not land at the dock on account of the storm, or, if outward bound, is afraid of it, and has anchored here."

"It has two masts," said Elizabeth.

"We are doing very well with our mutton-leg," said Nancy proudly, and I must confess that the sight of this towering vessel, held safe from the storm we were breasting, sent a thrill of elation through me. I am not proud of this feeling, however. I wish to be fearless, to unhesitatingly face all things, attempt all things, but I wish to find my joy in the pursuit itself, and in the thing I win, not in another's failure. It has been said that we should comfort ourselves in our

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distresses by remembering that thousands are more unfortunate than we. It would be better if we dispensed with distresses altogether, for if in those things that cause us distress we looked for wisdom, we would find them brimming with it.

Our boat was half-filled, and hard to manage when we left the violent strip of tide race, and came into quieter water in the lee of our island. We had been almost an hour on the way, for the wash of the waves, the adverse tide, the strong head wind, had been almost too much for us. As we passed the bush buoy, and neared the island, Nancy, as was her custom, lifted her voice in a long, penetrating call to the family at home. There was an explosive answer from the invisible beach ahead. Bob barked so frantically that his voice broke and his efforts ended in a series of discordant yelps. We almost ran him down, for he had leaped into the surf to meet us. We now heard the fainter voices of the cats. Yannie, leaping for the prow of the boat, as we dashed in, missed her footing and splashing into the water, was rolled upon the beach.

I fastened the boat, threw the sail, the oars and rudder far beyond high water mark, and hurried after the others to the cabin. Elizabeth had piled the fireplace full of dry wood, and as I entered, its roar and crackle greeted me as shouts of laughter, sparks from the pine sticks flew beyond the hearth in harmless showers, the room

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gleamed and twinkled with its light, and I could almost discern the forms of the fairies as they danced—their shadows on ceiling, walls and floor were plain enough.

The voices of the wind, the rain and water filled the night, and the cabin creaked and trembled constantly. There were gusts that we thought would surely lift us up and hurl us into the sea.

Clothed in warm wrappers, we sat by the fire and kept it howling up the chimney at the storm. At midnight, Elizabeth prepared a feast. We had a market basket full of fine fat oysters I had gathered at the last low tide, a stew of potatoes, onions, canned tomatoes and fresh mackerel, wood toast, tea, and jelly made two weeks before from wild grapes we had gathered two miles down the coast.

We sipped milk punches afterward, lolled before the fire, listened to the storm, grew warm and dry and drowsy.

"I hope it storms for a week," said Nancy.

"So do I," murmured Elizabeth, with a sleepy smile.

"We must have two days of bright sunshine. Everything must be thoroughly aired and dried before we put them away."

"Even if it does not storm," I said, "we may have no sun to speak of, for a week."

"I hope not. Oh, if Satan would but attend to me. If all manner of disaster would only befall me—if my business were ruined,

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my home disrupted, my reputation gone—if all my friends and relations disowned me, I might, perhaps, be permitted to be happy then. For my part, I would gladly endure all the triumphs of Napoleon, if I knew that in the end I should be overthrown and banished here."

"Let's go to bed," said Elizabeth.

I could no longer keep my pipe lit, and, vigorous as her sentiment had been, Nancy spoke with frequent yawns.

Ten minutes later, I might have been blown to New London, and not have known it, for I was asleep on a bed made comfortable by the hands of Elizabeth.

Saturday afternoon the rain ceased. Sunday was a cold, gray day, with an east wind. We spent it with Captain Green aboard the *Eric Lief*, cruising along the coast of Fisher's Island, slipping out into the ocean and back, trolling for mackerel, and coaxing him to make us a boat like his own.

"If I should promise you," he kept repeating, "I should have to do it. It took me several years to build this one. I might not be able to find just the timber to suit." This was the substance of his reply, and he neither refused nor promised.

"I think he will do it," said Nancy in the evening.

I could not agree with her, but she was confident and happy.

"We could sail around the world in such a boat."

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"I would rather have it than the finest yacht afloat, but that is too much to expect of him."

"I believe he will do it."

Monday a northwest wind was blowing. There was not a cloud. The sun blazed down upon us clear and strong. This was the end. There was no longer an excuse for delay. We covered the island with beds and bedding, and our clothing. We emptied the cabin, scrubbed it and left it open to the wind and sunlight. By evening, it was thoroughly dry. We put the chairs and table in the centre of the room, and spread the ticks and bedding on them. Our clothing we left hanging in the attic. In the afternoon Mr. Ashbey sailed over to measure the windows for wooden shutters. He would make them and fasten them in when we were gone. Captain Green made two trips in his little skiff, once to see if we were leaving, and once to bring us a basket of fruit and two bouquets of asters from his garden.

We put the cats in a covered basket, turned the key in the cabin door, and loading the boat with baskets and boxes, told Bob to jump in, and set sail for the dock of Mystic Island.

Gibbie had told me to leave our boat there for the winter, and he would paint it in the spring. And Bob was to be left there, too. I had taken him over there one day, and, to the surprise of every one, Royal had

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received his bold and boisterous advances in a friendly but dignified spirit. This was probably because Bob had come with me, and he understood that we were neighbors. He took him off to hunt rats along the beach, and taught him to dig holes in the ground.

A dinner had been prepared for us by Mrs. Wilcox. It was eaten in silence. There are few people in this world that Nancy and I love as we do Gibbie and his wife, Nora. I have said very little concerning them, for I could not say enough. It seemed to us that, in leaving our island and these neighbors, we were children venturing for the first time from home. As Nora was taking the coffee-pot from the stove, I saw her surreptitiously lift the corner of her apron to her eyes. They were brimming over when we said good-bye.

"It will be a lonely winter," she said, looking away from us quickly, beyond Latimer's Reef to the dull horizon of sky and water.

The twilight was falling as we left the island with Gibbie, in his sail-boat. Bob watched us move swiftly from the dock, and seeming to realize that he was deserted, lifted his nose and howled. Royal pushed against him, wagging his tail, and tried to induce him to a run, but Bob would not heed him. It grew dark rapidly, and by the time we landed at Ashbey's dock, we could see only the rough form of things. Gibbie

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handed our bundles up to us, and we said good-bye, and watched him push away. A voice came from a lobster boat moored near by.

“Are you going?”

“Yes, we have closed up for the season.”

“I am sorry. I shall miss the light in your window.”

We could not see the speaker, and did not recognize the voice.

“Good-bye, neighbor,” came another voice from a dock close to us.

“Good-bye,” we called, “and good luck to you.”

“You will be back in the spring?”

“We hope so.”

“Well, good luck to you.”

We carried the cats to the Ashbey house, where they found a harborage for the winter, and then, as we had an hour before train time, walked silently through the shipyard to Captain Green’s. He was just coming from his workshop, a lantern in his hand.

“I just looked across,” he said, “and there was no light on the island. I have got used to seeing it there.”

“You may be sure,” said Nancy, “that it was always a friendly light for you.”

“I felt that,” he said hastily, “and I have laid my course by it oftener than you think. Come inside,” he added, opening the shop door.

We entered, and the Captain, holding up the lantern, revealed a long oak beam rest-

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ing on blocks, and a shorter piece, curving like a duck's breast, fastened to one end. It was the keel and prow of a boat.

"O Captain," cried Nancy, "you have begun it."

"I won't promise," said he.

Then he showed us how thoroughly sound and seasoned the wood was, how the keel was not straight, as in most boats, but curved upward from the centre to both ends, and how the piece for the prow had not been cut to its peculiar shape, but had grown that way, as if nature herself from the beginning had intended it for this particular boat.

"I may never finish it," he said, "but here are two good timbers for it, anyway."

AS I write these lines, we are sitting in a row on the depot steps, our bundles and bags about us, waiting for the New York train. I am dressed in my city clothes, for the first time in four months and a half. My face is red and my hands are scarred and rough. I feel exceedingly strange,—an adventurer returning to the almost forgotten land of his youth, and I am bringing treasures with me. Although invisible, they are as real as any yet hauled from the sea, or dug from the earth, or found in an oyster's shell. I am bringing with me pictures, experiences, sounds and revelations

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that have become my indestructible possessions. Where shall I go now; what shall I do? Shall I choose the inland fields, the mountain forest, or the city? In any of these places, I may meet the requirements of winter with little more than my bare hands. I may be warmed and fed. More than shelter, clothing and food, the world cannot give me, unless I possess the spirit to receive, and if this spirit is mine, it does not matter where I am, or what I do, how great or little is my wealth, how conspicuous or obscure my position; all that can delight or profit a man will come to me until my heart and mind are full.

"It is wonderful," said Nancy just now, "that in all these months, we have received nothing from any one around here but the most unstinted kindness—not one unfriendly word or look; even the reserved glance, the hesitating speech, the cold or questioning glint has not once been offered us."

"That is true, and it is an exceedingly important fact to think over."

"Why don't you close with that statement, then?"

"I guess I will."

And still, I am not satisfied, for I can not give to these written words the grace with which she spoke them; the tender cadence, the moistened eyes, the memories that lived in them.

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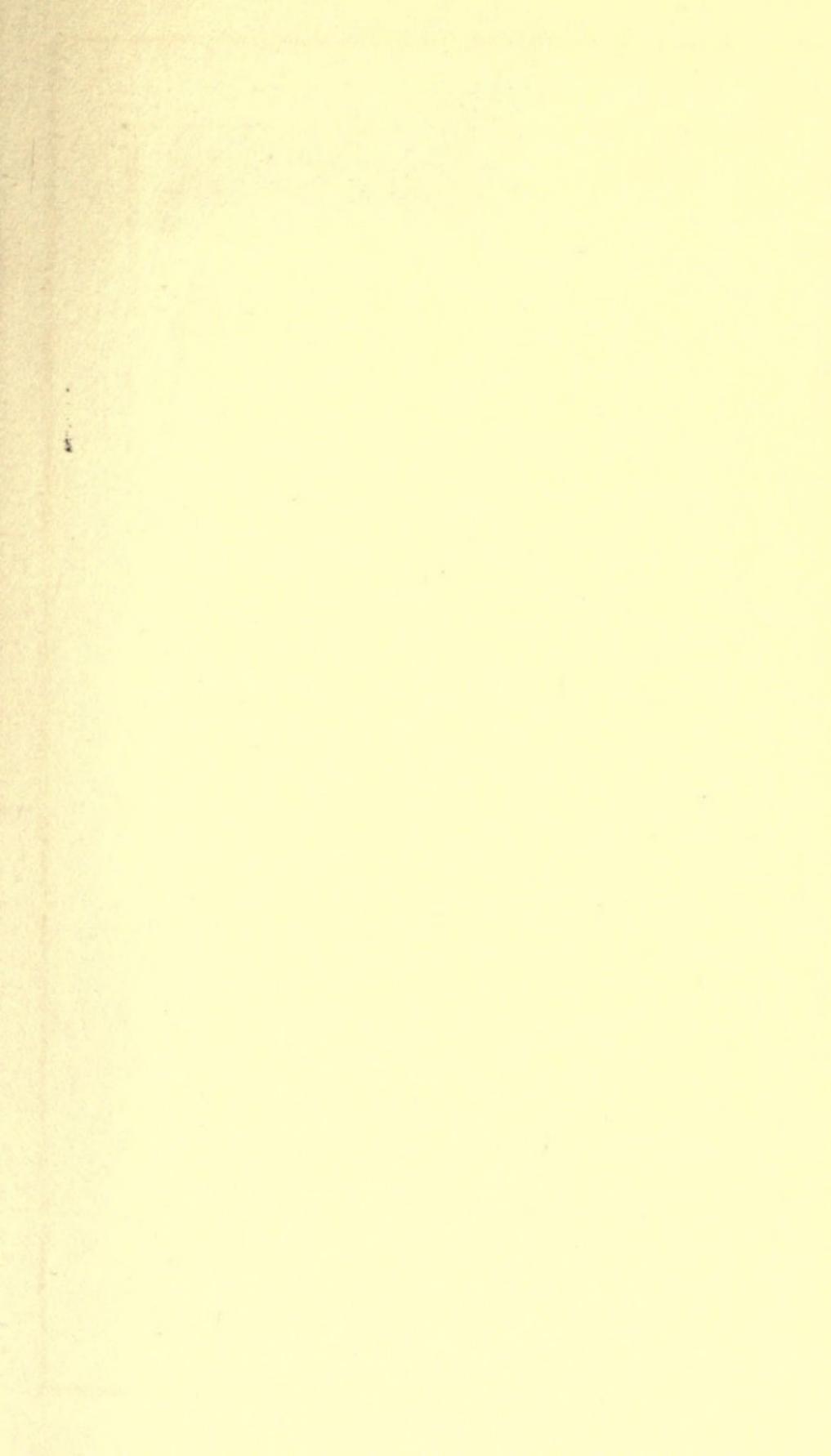
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